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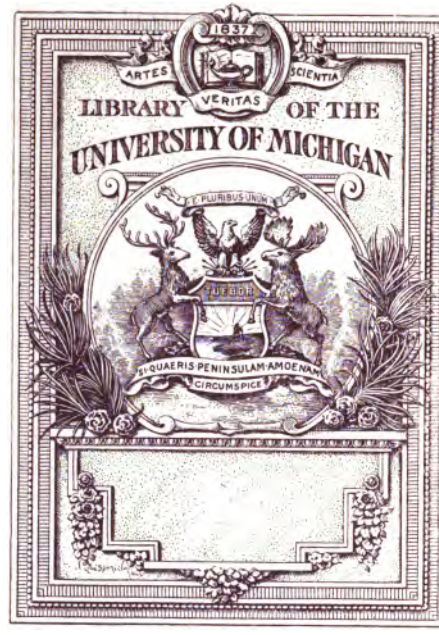
TREES IN NATURE MYTH AND ART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TREES
IN NATURE, MYTH AND ART

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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FIFTY YEARS OF PAINTING, COROT TO SARGENT
THE STORY OF ART IN THE BRITISH ISLES
THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD
A HANDBOOK TO THE PAINTINGS IN THE MANCHESTER CITY ART GALLERY, ETC.

"CROSSING THE BROOK"
By J. M. W. Turner. From the painting in the National Gallery

TREES

IN NATURE, MYTH AND ART

BY

J. ERNEST PHYTHIAN

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

THE thought of writing this book came to me during the preparation of a short series of articles on the pictorial representation of trees for the National Home Reading Union Magazine, in connection with which I had to consider the literature of the subject in order to recommend books for reading and reference. It seemed to me that there was room for an unpretentious book that would bring together many things definitely related to each other, yet hitherto, for the most part, treated separately. The publishers of this book agreed with me, and so it appears. It purports to be nothing more than introductory; but by quotation and reference it draws attention to some of the works that deal more thoroughly with the various matters discussed in it. For permission to make extensive quotation from one book, to which I owe much instruction and pleasure, Philip Gilbert Hamerton's *Landscape*, my

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thanks are due to Mrs. Hamerton and to its publishers, Messrs. Seeley & Co. My debt to this and other books I have quoted will be repaid, I hope, by my attracting readers to them. Besides books there are pictures; and beyond both literature and art there is Nature; and I hope it is not all too presumptuous for a happy, if somewhat desultory, scholar in her great school of life and beauty to chat for a brief while about some of the things that, with others' help, he has learned and learned to enjoy there.

J. E. P.

HOLMES CHAPEL, CHESHIRE
July, 1907

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By permission of the Corporation of Manchester.

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"The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing which stands in the way. Some see Nature all ridicule and deformity, and by these I shall not regulate my proportions; and some scarce see Nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees."—WILLIAM BLAKE.

TREES
IN NATURE, MYTH AND ART

CHAPTER I

THE SOUL OF A TREE

LEST the reader should fear that, if he venture forth along the pages of this opening chapter, he may be asked to believe in some modernised form of animism, let it be said at once that no glimmering of consciousness is here attributed to plant-life. It will be maintained later that the absence of consciousness distinctly marks off the emotion awakened within us by the contemplation of such life from that awakened by the animal world. In what sense, then, can we speak of the soul of a tree? We shall best arrive at an answer to this question by beginning in the inanimate world.

Even in these rigidly scientific days we cannot, and happily cannot, escape from thinking

of many inanimate objects, and from feeling towards them, in a way for which a narrowly exact science gives no authority. We almost endow them with personality; we feel strong affection for them; when they suffer injury we grieve for them. The inroads of the railway promoter upon lovely scenery are opposed almost in a spirit of chivalrous defence of that which cannot defend itself. The hills of our native land we count almost among our personal friends. How Surrey would mourn the loss of Leith Hill! Imagine the feelings of a Cornishman who should return from mining in a foreign land to learn that Brown Willy was no more! What fabulous sum would Shropshire refuse for that most venerable of our hills, the Wrekin, were it possible for a combine of millionaires to move it? Would Derbyshire part with Kinder Scout, Lancashire with Pendle, Yorkshire with Ingleborough, Whernside and Pen-y-ghent? It would be sacrilege even to suggest the possibility of betraying Snowdon and Cader Idris, Scawfell, Skiddaw and Helvellyn. And is not this feeling stronger, if anything, across the Border? Yet all these hills are but masses of inanimate matter that,

through being tougher than what was around them, have for longer time resisted the destructive forces of frost and rain. Their structure is not organic, only mechanical. They have not raised themselves by some inward life. Still we love them; and we are hurt if we are too insistently asked to think of them as what, in mere fact, they are, only little more than chance excrescences which would not roughen the surface of the globe to the feeling of one who could hold it in his hand. We are perhaps ready to speak even of the soul of the mountains, and almost to regret that not they, but only the trees they bear so lightly on their flanks, are our immediate subject.

Let us take one more illustration, this time from the work of man. The towers and spires of our cathedrals, abbeys and churches are hardly less dear to us than our hills. Kent will seek as carefully to make good the Bell Harry tower at Canterbury against wind and rain, as Shakespeare's Cliff at Dover against the inroads of the sea. Lincolnshire has no mountains; but it has the three towers on the edge of the wold, and Boston Stump, and many another landmark. Wiltshire has joy and pride

in Salisbury's dizzy height of tower and spire. Staffordshire loves "the Three Sisters of the Vale". Durham sees a type of North-country strength in the towers that look down upon the Wear, and far over the country through which the river has deeply cut its channel. Yet, again, these are but inanimate things. They come in one sense nearer to us than the hills, because man has made them. Almost legitimately we may speak of their soul; for something of the soul of man has entered into them. They seem well-nigh organic, nervous, in their structure. We could almost ask life for them, as did Pygmalion for the image he had made. Yet though they have individuality, and beauty, and strength, they have not life. But the trees have all that hill and tower have; and they have life as well. Do we read something of our soul into the hills; and think that we also read there something of the spirit of the Over-Soul? Do we find tower and spire that we have made to be in their measure akin to us? And is there no sense in which we can rightly speak of the soul of the tree?

We have ruled out animism, the belief that an individual spirit informs each living thing.

But some portion of the power we call life, which culminates, within the limits of our experience, in human nature, moves in the tree, and determines, in ways we can observe but not explain, what, to use the simple, biblical word, its kind shall be. I turn my head away from the page before me to look at a tree, and to wonder at the mystery of its being, and, almost more, at the arrest of its being below such consciousness as we must think the higher forms of animal life, at least, to possess. "In the beginning God created"—more than this: always, God, using the word, if the reader will have it so, in the broadest, vaguest sense, creates, brings forth, the living things, and determines, by laws we dimly trace, the character and limits of their being.

Mrs. Browning wrote:—

> A tree's mere firewood, unless humanised,—
> Which well the Greeks knew when they stirred its bark
> With close-pressed bosoms of subsiding nymphs,
> And made the forest-rivers garrulous
> With babble of gods.

About the nymphs we shall have something to say hereafter. It has to be said now that a tree is *not* mere firewood unless humanised;

any more than we human beings are mere food for worms if there be no after life for us. There are animal painters who humanise the animals they represent; and we do not thank them for so doing, unless they do it by way of jest. The interest of the lower animals to us is that they are in so many ways like us and yet are not of us. And so it is with the trees. Their life is in many ways like ours; and yet at how great a distance below us their evolution has been arrested! The highest animals are so far below us that, when in some ways they come near to us, the distance in other ways becomes even acutely pathetic. Vegetable and animal life seem in certain cases almost to overlap; yet, in the main, how wide is the gulf between them! It is not by pretending the trees to be human that we can become and continue keenly interested in them; but by seeing and feeling both their likeness to us and their difference from us.

In what ways are they like us? They are born, grow to maturity, fail and then die. They draw nourishment from earth and air; and by its aid are formed the myriad cells of which they are built up; the nutriment being

changed, by a process we can trace but cannot understand, into root, stem, bark, leaf or other part of their economy. They have no heart to pump the fluid nourishment throughout their frame from root to highest branch and twig; but other forces effect the needed circulation of food. They have a rough, thick skin to protect their sensitive, vital parts. Earth and air, rain and sunshine, are needful for their life; and they vary in character with varying habitat. They come near to us in that they differ in sex; and it is only by great restraint that we do not speak of their love-making. Ruskin, who in one place marks off the pathetic fallacy, by which we read ourselves into the lower forms of life and even inanimate nature, in another place says that "all plants are composed of essentially two parts—the leaf and root—one loving the light, the other darkness; one liking to be clean, the other to be dirty; one liking to grow for the most part up, the other for the most part down; and each having faculties and purposes of its own. But the pure one which loves the light, has, above all things, the purpose of being married to another leaf, and having child-leaves, and children's

children of leaves, to make the earth fair for ever. And when the leaves marry, they put on wedding-robes, and are more glorious than Solomon in all his glory, and they have feasts of honey, and we call them 'Flowers'."

We need not stay to distinguish fact from fancy in this passage. They distinguish themselves. That plants, including trees, do unconsciously—on our assumption—marry is fact; and those whose marriage is aided by insects make themselves—no, we must only say become—conspicuously attractive, and to our eyes beautiful, when the marrying-time comes round.

Mr. Edward Step, in *Wayside and Woodland Trees*, quotes Huxley's saying that "The plant is an animal confined in a wooden case; and Nature, like Sycorax, holds thousands of 'delicate Ariels' imprisoned in every oak. She is jealous of letting us know this; and among the higher and more conspicuous forms of plants reveals it only by such obscure manifestations as the shrinking of the Sensitive Plant, the sudden clasp of the Dionæa, or still more slightly, by the phenomena of the cyclosis." It really becomes difficult not to

wonder if there be consciousness in a tree! But the reader has been given a guarantee that he shall not be asked to go so far. Perhaps we must say that there is soul in the tree, even if we cannot literally speak of the soul of a tree. Charles Darwin, in a letter to Romanes, said that, if a theologian contended that God must have given to force and matter the attributes that culminate in life, he could not answer him. Romanes put the question, respecting natural causation: "Is it the mode in which a Divine Being is everywhere simultaneously and eternally operating?" Are Huxley's thousands of delicate Ariels the agents of such a Divine Being? These are questions not to be answered here; but, were we to answer them, it would not be with an emphatic negative. So once again, as I turn from writing to look at the trees, it is with wonder as to what they are in their inmost life.

All the early part of this book is meant to lead up to a study of the representation of trees in art. But we shall not know what to ask of the artist unless we set out with wonder. We must not refuse to nature a

capital N. Wordsworth thought that mortality must have been a meaningless word to the builders of our Gothic abbeys and cathedrals —of the towers and spires of which we have already taken account. Emerson said that, in the woods, "a man casts off his years as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God."

Emerson here expresses his feeling of what Matthew Arnold called "Nature's healing power". I have just taken down from the

shelf Walt Whitman's *Specimen Days in America*, and have opened the book, by happy chance, at the following passage in which he tells "The Lesson of a Tree". He says: "I should not take either the biggest or the most picturesque tree to illustrate it. Here is one of my favourites now before me, a fine yellow poplar, quite straight, perhaps ninety feet high, and four thick at the butt. How strong, vital, enduring! how dumbly eloquent! What suggestions of imperturbability and *being*, as against the human trait of mere *seeming*. Then the qualities, almost emotional, palpably artistic, heroic, of a tree; so innocent and harmless, yet so savage. It *is*, yet says nothing. How it rebukes, by its tough and equable serenity all weathers, this gusty-tempered little whiffet, man, that runs indoors at a mite of rain or snow. Science (or rather half-way science) scoffs at reminiscence of dryad and hamadryad, and of trees speaking. But, if they don't, they do as well as most speaking, writing, poetry, sermons—or rather they do a great deal better. I should say indeed that those old dryad reminiscences are quite as true as any, and profounder than most

reminiscences we get. ('Cut this out,' as the quack mediciners say, and keep by you.) Go and sit in a grove or woods, with one or more of those voiceless companions, and read the foregoing and think."

It is safe to assume that all who will read these pages have felt as these writers have felt, when in the woodland, though they may not have put their feeling into words. I am offering the reader nothing new, but only seeking to intensify his appreciation of something old. Perhaps our sense of fellowship with the trees is in part instinctive. It may have remained in the blood from the time that our ancestors lived and worshipped in the groves, nay, worshipped the trees themselves. Charles Kingsley could hardly bring himself to part with the idea that the pillars and branching vaulting-ribs of Gothic architecture were copied from the forest-aisles. We shall return to this subject hereafter, when we come to study the many ways in which trees have figured in architecture. At the moment I will only quote a passage from Kingsley's *Grots and Groves*, in which, speaking of the forms of trees when they grow socially, he says: "I

never understood how possible, how common, they must have been in mediæval Europe, till I saw in the forest of Fontainebleau a few oaks like the oak of Charlemagne, and the Bouquet du Roi, at whose age I dare not guess, but whose size and shape showed them to have once formed part of a continuous wood, the like whereof remains not in these isles, perhaps not east of the Carpathian Mountains. In them a clear shaft of at least sixty, it may be eighty feet, carries a flat head of boughs, each in itself a tree. In such a grove, I thought the heathen Gaul, even the heathen Frank, worshipped beneath 'trees of God'. Such trees, I thought, centuries after, inspired the genius of every builder of Gothic aisles and roofs." From this passage we take just now only the one suggestion that a sense of fellowship with the trees may be deep in our nature ; dormant only, it is but too likely, in those who are closely confined in our overgrown towns and cities ; ready to awake again if the companionship of trees should happily be granted them again.

Is the reader one of those for whom the companionship of trees is almost an impossi-

bility? I do not mean merely that, while living away from them, he may often see them, even at all seasons of the year. This is not enough for companionship. It is, of course, quite possible to live always amongst trees and yet have no companionship with them, not to have even so much as a nodding acquaintance; and one may live in a London street and have companionship with the trees in the parks. We shall see hereafter that this was true of the painter Millais. Perhaps there are not a few who have made friends among the trees and think of them from afar. In these restless days we hurry from place to place, changing frequently even our holiday-resorts. It will be well for us if we have, those of us who must spend most of our time in the town, some spot in the country to which we return again and again. Not a few of our landscape painters have done their life-work within a radius of not many miles of the place where once they found that at last they were at home. In England we have had our "Norwich School," in France they have had their "Barbizon School," to give only two examples. The reader is short of something if he have

no bit of woodland which he visits again and again, not once nor twice only, as each year passes by. If he have this he will know what it is to enjoy the companionship of trees. He will learn to know them in their various moods, and he will find also how different they are to him according to his own mood.

There is closer companionship for those who have actively to watch and care for trees. I who write these pages am a townsman who happily, so many years ago that I cannot at once tell the number, escaped into the country; and, if I am to be a good tenant, and a good patriot, in the large sense of the word, must take some care of oak and ash, of beech and elm, of sycamore and chestnut, and many other trees; must see that the fruit-trees are pruned; that those past bearing are taken away, and young ones planted in their stead. Alas that, not being to the manner born, and busied with other things, it may be also lacking enterprise, I let most of the work be done by another! But I have been enough among the trees, and have planned and worked enough among them, to have come to know them intimately, to grieve if one must go, almost to grieve if, for

the good of a tree, a branch must come out, to give the new wood a chance; or to let another tree, that is being injured by a more strongly growing neighbour, have more room; and my heart sinks whenever I think that some day I may have to leave these humble friends of mine to the care or the neglect of others. Before I came among them others cared for them or lived indifferent to them. Here, though I have called them humble, they seem, in more than their height, to rise above me. By their silent endurance, by their mere length of years, by their naturalness, they soothe and strengthen. Though the tree have not a soul, it is to me as if it had.

In a later chapter we shall have much to say about the various kinds of trees. Botanists divide them into several orders, and there are varying species within the orders. Not only this, but individual trees have their own character. We may say simply that this is an oak, that a beech, and that an elm; as we distinguish Englishman, Frenchman and German. But the tree lover goes further than this; as we do also with our fellows when we know them intimately. Not every oak has just the same ap-

pearance of rugged strength. Not every silver birch is just as graceful as every other. And individuals of the same kind grow very differently under varying conditions of soil and climate. How different also are trees according to their age. They have individuality; and, as with men, their individual character is more strongly marked at one time of life than at another. Like us, too, they are creatures of habit; and their habits become fixed; from which quality of theirs many a moral lesson has been drawn for the benefit of human saplings. Have we not also fruitful trees and unfruitful trees; the latter, however, being fruitful, at least, in homilies? Also do not the trees aid each other and injure each other? Are not some of them social in their habit and others markedly individualistic? And when the trees live together in companies, must not each part with something of its liberty as the price of social companionship?

All this varied life of the trees went on for long ages before there were any human eyes to watch it, and human minds to wonder at it, and human brains and hands to modify it. In many ways men have varied the life of the

trees to suit their own use and liking. They have brought into play what the men of science call artificial selection. But is that which we call natural selection any less artificial? Have we any right to call only that which we do, artifice? Is there skill and purpose only in the planting of larch-woods so that there shall be the maximum of long, straight timber; and no skill and purpose in the evolution that has produced trees so widely differing as the oak and the larch? I, at least, am with Walt Whitman, when he calls the science that scoffs at reminiscence of dryad and hamadryad but half-way science, and declares such reminiscence to be quite as true as any, and profounder than most reminiscences we get.

So when I am among the trees, and much more when I work among them, it is always with the thought that the power that works in me works also in them; and, according to its own purpose, determines their likeness and their difference. Matter and motion, as we conceive them, could not produce a tree. The laws of nature are but the ways in which is working, in the lowest as well as in the highest forms of life, a power which must be in every way

A WOOD NYMPH
From a design by Sir E. Burne-Jones

superior to the highest outcome of its working. Darwin, in the instance already referred to, put into the mouth of the imaginary theologian the objection, "you have no right to say that all natural laws necessarily follow from gravity, the persistence of force, and existence of matter. If you say that nebulous matter existed aboriginally and from eternity with all its present complex powers in a potential state; you seem to me to beg the whole question." And his significant comment on this objection was, "Please observe it is not I, but a theologian who has thus addressed you, but I could not answer him".

This may seem heavy material to bring into a book about trees in nature, myth and art. But probably the reader will readily see the purpose of it, which is to aid him in realising the wonder of tree-life. Does any one say, impatiently, that the wonder is obvious? I am only too glad if this be so. Only let us be sure that, being obvious, it is not taken for granted, and not felt. Or it may be said that animal life is still more wonderful. Agreed. And what questions would come up for probing if it were animal

life we were discussing; such, for example as Blake's question to the tiger:—

> Did He who made the lamb make thee?

To this question the tiger could give no answer. But who could give the answer, and say why the mild and the fierce must both have a place in creation? And the trees can give no answer to any question we may ask about the life that lives in their cells and along their fibre. But who can give the answer? We can guess at it, as we watch the trees, or work among them, modifying their life. The whole answer it is not ours to have.

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but *if* I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

So said Tennyson.

> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

So said Wordsworth. I make no apology for having headed this chapter "The Soul of a Tree".

CHAPTER II

TREE-WORSHIP

THE promise not to ask the reader to believe in any form of animism has been kept. He will not, however, object to consider for a brief space the animistic beliefs that have been held in the past, and are still held by a larger part of the human race than is commonly realised. It would be wrong to suppose that, because the old significance of such observances as those still customary with us at Christmas and May-Day has ceased to exist for us, it has ceased to exist for even the majority of our fellow-beings. We may go into the woods with no thought of there being in them spirits, good or evil; but it is not so with more than a considerable minority of the human race. It is interesting to wake up to such facts. Beliefs are still widely held that are earlier in origin, and lower as thought,

than the mythology of ancient Greece. Tree worship, which obviously has interest for us here, and which we find low down in, if not at the base of, the structure of the ancient faiths, is still in vogue to-day. In the course of its history it has found remarkable expression in art and literature. A most interesting chapter of human thought is closed to us if we be not acquainted with its history; and the trees then say far less to us than otherwise they would. For many reasons we must study, if only briefly, that belief in "something human in a tree," something, indeed, more than human, which is only less general now than it was in earlier ages.

We begin lower than this, amid ideas that are hardly to be associated with religion, which, in fact, are the first, or, at least, the earliest known attempts at natural science. We might almost say that man starts out as his own god, believing in no other control of nature than his own. He looks to no higher power than himself for help in bringing rain or making his trees fruitful, or whatever else he needs or wishes, that nature at the time is withholding from him. It is a far cry from this belief to

one in higher beings whose aid must be begged or bought.

The earliest ideas of cause and effect are extremely crude. It is believed that neighbourhood and superficial likeness establish causal relations. This belief is still widely prevalent. Mr. J. G. Frazer says in *The Golden Bough*, that "if the test of truth lay in a show of hands or a counting of heads, the system of magic might appeal, with far more reason than the Catholic Church, to the proud motto, *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, as the sure and certain credential of its own infallibility".

The reader will be familiar with many instances of imitative magic, such as pouring out water in imitation of rain, and beating drums in imitation of thunder, in order to bring a drought to an end. The people who do this are not invoking a higher power; they believe that the resemblance will suffice to produce the reality. We must limit ourselves to a few examples relating to our particular subject. Mr. Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, gives many modern instances; of which the following ones will suffice for our purpose.

No farther away from us than Bohemia the first apple borne by a tree is sometimes plucked and eaten by a woman who has given birth to many children. It is believed that this will make the tree, in the gardener's phrase, a free bearer. The Galelareese, a Moluccan tribe, think that if a tree do not bear fruit it must be a male; so they change its sex by dressing it up in a woman's petticoat, whereupon, of course, it will become prolific. These people will not shoot with bow and arrows under a fruit-tree. They think the tree will copy the bow, and let fall its fruit, as the arrows drop to the ground. Again, when they eat a water-melon, they will not mix the pips they spit out of their mouths with the pips that have been put aside for seed. They think that if the pips that have been spat out do germinate, spring up and blossom, the blooms will fall as the pips fell from the mouth, and thus these pips will be fruitless.

Not only is it believed that men can thus influence trees intentionally and unintentionally, by imitative magic, but it is also believed that they can themselves be similarly influenced. Mr. Frazer quotes the Galelareese beliefs that

any one who eats a fruit that has fallen to the ground will contract a disposition to stumble and fall, and that any one partaking of something that has been forgotten, such as a sweet potato left in the pot or a banana left in the fire, will become forgetful. Another remarkable instance he gives is a Vedic charm "by which a banished prince might be restored to his kingdom. He had to eat food cooked on a fire which was fed with wood from a tree which had been cut down. The recuperative power manifested by such a tree would in due course be communicated through the fire to the food, and so to the prince who ate the food which was cooked on the fire which was fed with the wood which grew out of the tree."

We are on very different ground when man has learned to believe in beings, mightier and wiser than himself, who control nature and man as well, and by whose aid alone, or by averting their antagonism, he can accomplish his ends. Man is humbled when he realises how much is done for him compared with what he himself can do, and he prostrates himself in prayer where he has aforetime exercised his supposed power. It is now that animism

emerges clear as the belief that whatever natural objects have life or force also possess consciousness. How different the world must have felt to the people who believed this from what it seems to us to-day! Macaulay's "Father Tiber, to whom the Romans pray," which seems naïve and childish to us, was the mere commonplace of undoubted fact in an earlier age—for the river had force. The trees had more than force, they had life, that life which to us is still so wonderful and inexplicable; much more certain was it that they would be credited with consciousness. It is not my purpose, even were it within my power, learnedly to discuss the nature and origin of tree-worship. It is dealt with here, not with the aim of scientific exposition, but only to add to the keenness of our interest in the trees and the woods, when we are among them, and think, not only of what they mean to us now, but of what they have meant in the past, and still mean indeed, to the most backward tribes of the human race. It is strange to us to think that the trees which we value now only for their beauty and their serviceableness, have been worshipped as gods.

In this connexion we must not forget how different from what they are now, used to be the nature around man and his relation to it. The old saying that God made the country and man made the town, can only be accepted in a limited sense. Using the old phraseology, we should rather say that God made nature, and man has made both town and country out of nature; the country, as we know it, being nature adapted by man to his own use. Early man, in whom grew up the beliefs we have to consider, lived neither in town nor country; for neither of them was in existence in his day. He lived, a wild creature, amid wild nature, over which he had no control; and he had to win a precarious livelihood faced by the fierce competition of other creatures wilder than himself. When we go into the woods to-day we may be startled, but we do not expect to find cause for fear. It is we who cause fear to the rabbit, the pheasant or the wood-pigeon, that startles us by its hasty flight on our approach. But early man, not merely entering woods, but living amid vast forests which he had had no hand in planting, had good

cause for fear in the wild, fierce creatures the bear, the wolf and the boar for example that inhabited them. It has been suggested that some of the prehistoric camps found on the Downs, were defences rather against the wild beasts that roamed the vast forests than against human enemies. We now sleep comfortably in our beds, and if we awake in the night and hear the hoot of the owl, or the bark of the fox, we only feel it a trifle uncanny; we are not struck cold with fear. But what said the Samoan chief to the missionary when asked as to his idea of a deity? "We know that at night some one goes by amongst the trees, but we never speak of it."

Early man had as alternatives, not town or country, with occasional holidays amid untamed nature, he had the forest and the fen, the bare upland, the vast plain, the desert and the sea. How hardly with his poor tools and weapons would he make headway against fauna and flora that, if we may so put it, had their own ends to serve. Think of the difficulty with which the first forest-clearings would be even kept clear! Attributing consciousness to everything having life and force,

man would soon distinguish between the helpful and the harmful, between food and poison, between benevolent spirits to be rewarded, and malevolent ones to be propitiated. And, if the spirits that were usually benevolent ceased to be so—if a tree did not bear fruit, for example—clearly the spirit had been offended, and his wrath must be appeased by gifts. This was the stage at which man arrived when magic ceased to have his sole adherence.

Has it become easy for us now to realise that once it was a widespread belief that two trees were the progenitors of the human race? Indeed we may say that it was universal, where trees were to be found. What a strange, rude anticipation of the modern theory of evolution! The Eddas have it that after the creation of heaven and earth, Odin and his brothers, walking by the sea, came upon two trees, and changed them into human beings, one male and the other female. From the first brother they received life and soul; from the second, wit and the will to move; from the third, face, speech, sight and hearing. The gods also gave them clothing, and chose

their names. Ask was the man's name and Embla the woman's. Thus were our first parents brought to life, and given a start in the world! From the ash (Ask) was made the first man; from the elm (Embla) the first woman.

In all the continents the same belief was held; and from all of them similar stories have been gathered. It is almost needless to say that the belief is even now far from being extinct.

So we have the trees both worshipped and regarded as the progenitors of the human race. Here is a point of contact between tree-worship and ancestor-worship; and, knowing how large a part ancestor-worship has played, and still plays, in religion, we shall not be surprised to find that much of the religion of Egypt, Greece, Rome and other countries, can be traced to earlier tree-worship; and that the statues of the gods, wrought by the great sculptors of classical Greece, were but developments from the tree-trunks and upright stones that materialised the earlier faiths. In *Mycenæan Tree and Pillar Cult*, Mr. Arthur J. Evans points out that even when, after a long evolution, the

gods of Greece had taken human form, when the statue had replaced the tree or pillar, and the mere fence or dolmen-shrine had been superseded by the temple, traces of the earlier worship still survived, especially where the Mycenæan element in the population of classical Greece was the strongest. "The Pelasgic Zeus," he says, "still abode among the oaks of Dodona. Beside the Castalian Spring the sacred plane-tree of Zeus Agamemnon and the holy stone of refuge beneath it might claim precedence of the bay and omphalos of the Delphic God. The plane of Helena at Sparta and that of Menelaos at Kaphyæ in Arcadia take us back to the same prehistoric stratum of the population. The great Arcadian Zeus, whose only shrine was the oak-woods of Mount Lykaeos, otherwise found his material shape in the twin columns that rose upon its topmost height towards the rising sun, in front of the mound that stood for his altar."

We may be straying into a by-path—which may be pardonable, however, in such a book as this—when we note that in these earlier beliefs we find the reason why the Greek attributed life to the statues he had made. The Mycen-

æan peoples worshipped the living tree, an the column or tree-pillar as a substitute for it believing that both were possessed by th *numen* or spirit of the divinity; though it wa thought that the spirit was more permanentl present in the tree with its fruit and foliag than in the stone into which it had to b brought through a special act of ritual invoca tion. The story of the sculptor Pygmalion praying to Aphrodite that the statue he had made might receive the gift of life, and of his prayer being granted, receives a new meaning in the light of these old beliefs.

All this may seem very far from us; but it comes close home to us, takes its place in our own fields and woodlands, when we read in Mr. Evans's book: "In the Druidical worship of the West, the tree divinity and the Menhir or stone pillar are associated in a very similar manner, and lingering traditions of their relationship are still traceable in modern folklore. To illustrate indeed this sympathetic conjunction of tree and pillar, we have to go no further afield than the borders of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. Beside the prehistoric stone fence of Rollright the elder-tree still stands

hard by the King Stone, about which it is told that when the flowery branch was cut on Midsummer Eve, the tree bled, the stone 'moved its head'." In a later chapter we shall have something to say about the churchyard yew; and if we could trace back to their origin the predecessors of the crosses in our market-places, in what strange worlds of thought should we be? Just as, though we have no volcanoes and no glaciers in our islands to-day, there are still abundant evidences of their existence and activity in the far-off ages of the past, so there are abundant evidences around us also of old-time beliefs such as are now held only by the most backward races. Our own time is prosaic only to the prosaic; but however alive we may be to the romance of the present, life will be all the richer if we realise that all around us, in our own land, are relics of the romance of the past.

If, according to the old belief, trees be animate, they can, of course, suffer pain. And, to this day, old peasants in Austria beg the pardon of a tree when they fell it. "Some of the Philippine Islanders," says Mr. Frazer, "believe that the souls of their ancestors are in

certain trees, which they therefore spare. they are obliged to fell one of these trees, the excuse themselves to it by saying that it wa the priests who made them do it. The spirit take up their abode, by preference, in tal stately trees with great spreading branches When the wind rustles the leaves, the native fancy it is the voice of the spirit; and they never pass one of these trees without bowing respectfully, and asking pardon of the spirit for disturbing his repose."

The tree-spirits, like human beings, may need to be coerced into doing their duty. So South Slavonian and Bulgarian peasants will even now, on Christmas Eve, threaten a barren fruit-tree with an axe. Another man, standing by, intercedes for the tree, saying, "Do not cut it down; it will soon bear fruit". The axe is swung three times; three times is the intercession made. The tree is spared; and, thankful to have escaped, and fearing that another time mercy may not be shown, it of course bears fruit in future!

The tree-spirits are variously useful. They bring grain, and they make the crops grow. Mr. Frazer's explanation of the latter of these

two functions is that "the tree is the largest and most powerful member of the vegetable kingdom, and man is familiar with it before he takes to cultivating corn. Hence he naturally places the feebler and, to him, newer plant under the dominion of the older and more powerful." The spirits also make herbs multiply, and influence child-bearing. We shall have more to say about this when we consider the origin of our Christmas, May-Day and other customs.

We are all familiar with evidences of tree-worship in the Old Testament, even if we have not fully recognised their significance. The *ashera* of the Canaanites was not a grove, as our translation has it, but a tree or post; and the tree or post appears again and again in connexion with Divine appearances. So Jehovah appeared to Abraham beneath the oak-tree in Mamre, and to Moses in the burning bush. At Shechem Joshua "took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the Sanctuary of the Lord". Deborah the prophetess "dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel

came up to her for judgment". It was "under an oak which was in Ophrah" that the angel of the Lord came and sat, and spoke to Gideon, telling him that it was he who was to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Those who are familiar with the beliefs of many countries will readily see in some of these biblical narratives a belief in the tree as oracle, or medium of communication between gods and men. The voice of God came to Moses from the burning bush; and David, when he inquired of the Lord, how and when he should attack the Philistines, was told "thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself; for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines."

What a vivid picture Isaiah draws of the worship of image and tree, or, at least, of the image made from the tree! "Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image, that is profitable for nothing? . . . The smith with the tongs

both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms; yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth meat, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my God." Perhaps the prophet is a little less

than just to the beliefs that he had transcended. He had learned to believe in one great spirit living and working in all things. Around him were those who believed, not that wood or brass could help them, but that spirits innumerable could find a home in all living things and in material substances. We need not discuss, however, what is a commonplace of the history of religion—misinterpretation of an alien belief. The vivid contemporary description of the beliefs we have been recording is what interests us in the passage.

The oak of Zeus at Dodona, already referred to, was an oracle. It was the most venerable tree in a grove of oaks, and was believed to be the actual seat of the god, whose oracular answers were given by the rustling of the wind through leaves and branches, by the murmur of the spring that flowed out from among its roots, or by lots drawn from an urn placed beneath it.

Brazen vessels which, hung in the branches, clashed together when the wind moved them, also played their part in the oracular messages, which were interpreted by priests, and also by aged women, called *πέλειαι*, or doves, because

doves were said to have brought from Zeus the command to establish the oracle. We are familiar with the wood-pigeon and its gentle note; but perhaps we have not thought of it as having once been regarded as an intermediary between gods and men.

There were other tree-oracles in Greece, and, like the other ancient religious forms and customs we have been noting, such oracles existed in many lands. Our German ancestors practised divination by means of pieces cut from the branch of a fruit-tree and thrown upon a white cloth; and the Druids employed similar means. The divining-rod of the water-finder, cut from hazel or thornbush, reminds us of the truth of the saying that we have but to scratch the skin of the civilised man to find the savage beneath it.

Akin to the belief in a spirit dwelling within the tree is the belief in the change of human beings into trees; and this has been a favourite one with poet and painter. The stories of such change that came down from the old mythology were the subject of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Daphne, fleeing from Apollo, prayed to her mother, Earth, to deliver her,

and the ground opened and so rescued her and in her place sprang up a laurel-tree ; and Apollo thereupon declared that the laurel should be sacred to him. In the same way Syrinx, fleeing from Pan, was changed by her father, Ladon, into a reed. The three daughters of the Sun and Clymene, mourning when Zeus had hurled their presumptuous brother Phaëthon into the river Eridanus, were changed into poplars growing by the river-side, while their mother vainly sought to save them from their fate. Phyllis, who hanged herself because she thought her lover Demophoon had deserted her, was changed into an almond-tree; and when the repentant lover embraced it, its branches broke out into leaf and flower. Nor are such stories confined to the lands that we call classic. They are to be found everywhere. A Cornish legend tells that Tristram and Iseult were buried in the same church, only, by command of King Mark, at some distance from each other; but that ivy started from the grave of each and met in the vaulted roof above. Once more we find that romance need not be sought in other, distant lands. The trees of our own gardens, fields and

woodlands are the descendants of trees that were worshipped as gods.

The ceremonies of Christmas and May-Day have come down to us from the days of tree-worship. The birth of Christ is celebrated at the time of the winter-solstice, not because He was born at that time of the year, but because the Church found it advantageous to supersede with such a festival the pre-Christian rejoicing that the turn of the year had come, and that the sun, rising daily higher in the heavens, would bring on first the spring-time and then the summer. The earlier reason for rejoicing was not in fact wholly superseded; and we still retain some of the forms of it, and many of us the spirit of it, even though the season be now primarily associated with the sun of right-eousness arising with healing in his wings.

Many an old myth, such as the Egyptian one of Isis mourning for Osiris, and the Greek ones of Demeter mourning for Persephone and Ariadne for Theseus, show that the fall of the leaves in autumn, the winter bareness of the trees, and the fading of the flowers, were likened to or accounted death; and that the spring-time renewal was regarded as a new

life. When wind and frost had stripped the oak-tree of the last leaves that had clung to the branches, it was believed that the spirit of the oak took refuge in the mistletoe. How many of us realise, when we hang up the mistletoe-bough, that our ancestors brought it into the house, believing that the tree-spirit would come with it and bring the blessing of fertility? This is the "true inwardness" of kissing under the mistletoe. It is to these old beliefs that we owe also the Christmas-tree, and the decoration of our houses with evergreens. The tree-spirit was, as we have seen, the giver of many blessings. With mere branch or log or stick the spirit would also come, and ensure well-being and fertility, not only to the household, but to the cattle in the stall.

May-Day ceremonies are not as generally observed as those of Christmas; but they have the same kind of significance. They were not in origin a mere sign of rejoicing that the leaves were on the trees again, and the flowers blooming once more. They were religious observances, believed to secure the blessings the spirits could bestow. The spirit that in-

habited the tree inhabited also the Maypole taken from the tree; and the dance round the Maypole was a religious ceremony. The garlands that children still carry from house to house were believed in the past to secure a visit from the spirit, and consequent well-being. The May-Queen and Jack-in-the-Green were, in origin, human forms of the tree-spirit. The belief that the Maypole ensures fertility, both in women and cattle, is not yet extinct even in Europe; and in some parts of Germany, on May-Day, the peasants set up May-trees at the doors of stable and cow-byre, a tree for each horse and cow, to ensure fertility, and that the cows will give plenty of milk. Whitsuntide customs and those of the Eve of St. John and of harvest-time have the same kind of significance.

Most of us, nowadays, live in a world of buildings. If there be trees near us they are few and far between; and for the most part they are unhealthy. Their spirits, if they had any, could not but be unhappy. Our far-off ancestors lived in a world of trees. Some of us, to-day, count ourselves happy because, even though at some inconvenience, we live

where there are more trees than buildings. Nature, though partly subdued to man's use, is still around us. Daily we are faced by whole kingdoms of life that are a mystery to us. When we step out into the road at night it is not to see lamps, but the stars; and they are not less wonderful to us because we know them to be not fixed in a solid vault held up above the earth by a huge tree, but great suns millions of miles away in the depths of space. The fields and the woodlands are not less romantic to us than they were to the people of earlier days, because we cannot, as they did, people them with kindred spirits. What seems strange to us was commonplace to them. But we are dull if the constant miracle of myriad life, of living things bearing, each after its kind, do not often bring to us thoughts too deep for tears. When we go out to cut the holly and the mistletoe at Christmas-time, and when, after the sweet showers of April have brought the flowers of May, we again observe old customs, it is with more, surely, rather than less of the old delight and wonder; for our conception of the spirit-world that moves the stars in heaven, and brings life

Alinari

SACRED TREE AND ATTENDANT SPIRITS
St. Mark's, Venice

upon the earth, is deeper if less defined than that which these customs expressed in the days that have long gone by.

We have briefly noted the fabled life and power of real trees; we must now turn to the trees that only existed in imagination. Such was the tree that was widely believed to bear up the heaven above the earth. This was the Yggdrasil of the Scandinavians. The Babylonians placed it near Eridu, an ancient city near the mouth of the Euphrates. Its roots were deep down in the watery abyss where dwelt the amphibious Ea, god of wisdom, who supplied from thence the springs and rivers that fertilised the earth; and upon its leafage rested Zikum, the primeval mother, the heaven from which all things have come. Earth was midway between the roots of the tree and its topmost branches; and in its stem dwelt Ea, the earth-mother, her consort, Davkina, and her son Tammuz, the sun-god, to whom was wedded Istar, the Astarte of the Syrians, the Aphrodite of the Greeks, the Venus of the Romans. Here are old-world beliefs for us to think about when we see the stars as if entangled amid the leaves and branches of the trees!

Perhaps we ought not to leave this fabled tree without saying more about the Scandinavian version of it, Yggdrasil. It was an ash. We have seen that, out of an ash, Odin made the first man. So Yggdrasil was the tree of existence, of life and of knowledge, of sorrow and of fate. It was, indeed, the source of all things, including time and space. It was the upholder of the universe. Of its three roots, one reached down into Niflheim, to the well Hvergelmer, and was gnawed there by the dragon Nidhug and his brood. The second root reached down to Jotunheim, to the well Mimer, where knowledge and wisdom were hidden. The third root was in Asgard, where the gods sat in judgment by the sacred fountain of Urd, riding thither daily over the Bifrost bridge, the rainbow.

From the beautiful hall which was there, came three maids, the Norns, who shaped human destiny—Urd, who was the Past; Verdande, the Present; and Skuld, the Future. They wove the web of human life, a golden thread, stretching from the dawn to the sunset of life. Urd and Verdande wove it, but Skuld rent it every evening. Its branches enfolded

the world, and the topmost ones reached to heaven. The wise eagle—the air—sat on its boughs, and the hawk, Vedfolner—the tranquil ether—was seated between his eyes. The squirrel, Ratatosk—the hail and other atmospheric phenomena—running up and down the tree, caused hatred and strife between the eagle and Nidhug. Four stags—the four great winds—leaped about among the branches and ate the buds. Two swans swam in the fountain of Urd; and everything placed in it became white as an egg-shell film. The Norns drew from it water, with which to sprinkle the tree, so that its branches should never wither, and its leaves ever remain green. From Yggdrasil fell the honey-dew, the food of the bees. In the beautiful hall, Valhal, were the apples by eating which the gods renewed their youth.

Such a myth as this shows even more clearly than the belief that the first man and woman were made from trees, that primitive man must have regarded tree-life in a way that we can only dimly understand. Tom Hood's

> I remember, I remember,
> The fir-trees dark and high;
> I used to think their slender tops
> Were close against the sky,

shows once more, when taken in connexion with the belief in a great tree that bore up heaven above the earth, that the thoughts of the child are akin to those of the childhood of the race. And when he continues—

> It was a childish ignorance,
> But now 'tis little joy
> To know I'm farther off from Heav'n
> Than when I was a boy,

it is only a record of the passing by the individual through the same experience through which the race has passed; which made Wordsworth long even for a creed outworn, if only he could feel nature more akin to him, and which sent up into the heavens, now not merely so far away, but illimitably vast, Tennyson's cry—

> Will my tiny spark of being wholly
> Vanish in your deeps and heights?
> Must my day be dark by reason, O ye
> Heavens of your boundless nights,
> Rush of Suns, and roll of systems, and
> Your fiery clash of meteorites?

The universe can hardly have seemed greater to the men and women among whom arose such a myth as that of the tree Yggdrasil than

the world seems to the child that plays about his mother's knee; and death to those who believed that in dreams they saw living those whose bodies they had seen lie motionless and then decay, could have had no more terror than to the child there is terror in going to sleep at night knowing that his mother will wake him in the morning. Nay, there are still races whose childish eyes see the universe thus, and whose childish minds thus think of death. And it may be that, essentially, the children are right.

In our first chapter, hills, buildings and trees have been compared as objects towards which we come to feel affection although we know that they can have none for us in return. Let us associate them again for another purpose. Early belief, of which the form most familiar to us is the biblical story of the garden of Eden, placed the progenitors of the human race in a walled garden or park. The word paradise signifies such an enclosure. There has been much discussion as to where exactly this garden was supposed to have been. Into this we need not enter. It is sufficient to say that it was somewhere in the mountainous country of

Central Asia. The garden stood on the flank of a great mountain, from which flowed the four great rivers that nourished the earth. It was sometimes a mountain, sometimes a tree, that was believed to hold heaven in its place above the earth. Let us quote from the Hebrew version of the story. It may come to us with a fresh significance after all the tree-lore we have been studying. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted into four heads." Here then, according to the ancient belief, were placed our first parents, in a paradise, a walled garden, where grew only the trees that were pleasant to the sight and good for food; no thorns or thistles grew in it. The fruit of

the tree of life would bring to the eater of it the gift of immortality. The fruit of the forbidden tree would give the knowledge of good and evil. Of this our first parents ate, and they were driven from the garden, lest they should eat of the tree of life and live for ever; and the ground was cursed because of their sin, and they were condemned to labour and to sorrow.

The paradise to which men looked back, then, was a walled garden. Those who turned regretful thoughts towards the innocent happiness of the first man and woman, where all was health and beauty, were dwellers in walled towns; at least, such towns had become the great centres of activity; they were the nerve-centres, the beating hearts of growing civilisation. The older life, when there was neither town nor country, but only nature, was ceasing to be even a tradition. But we find still lingering the belief in the magic properties of the fruit of trees: a relic of the earlier stages of belief we have been passing in review; and, as we have seen, such belief still lingers among the most backward races, and among the unlettered peasantry of the civilised world.

But man looks forward as well as backward. The paradise that has been lost is to be regained. Only the future paradise is to be not a garden but a city. Buildings, as civilisation —the gathering of men into cities—progresses, take more and more the place which, in some ways, trees had held in the past. The temple, not the tree, becomes the place where the god reveals himself. "And I John saw the holy city, near Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." But no temple will be needed. "And I saw no temple therein : for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Such is the ideal of those for whom life centres in the city. Yet even here the old ideal still lingers. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

I venture no comment. It is all wonderfully, solemnly beautiful. I lay down my pen and think and dream, adding first the further words of the vision: "And there shall be no more curse".

CHAPTER III

TREES IN NATURE

IT might seem as if we should be abandoning poetry for prose, the dawn-light of imagination for the noonday-light of fact, in leaving tree-myths to study the trees as we see them and think about them—and make quite ordinary use of them—to-day. If it be so the fault will lie with us. We shall provide the prose; nature knows none of it. It is true that we shall often get into the land of myth again. We shall have to note the beliefs that have been held with reference to particular trees. But this apart, the study of tree-life and character is not a prosaic thing, even if pursued in the laborious way of modern science. Such scientific study, however, does not lie before us here, at least, not in this chapter; and there will be but little of it in any part of the book. When Pope said that the proper study of mankind was

man, he was not thinking of the anatomy and physiology of man, but of his thoughts and his emotions. The trees do not take us on to such high ground; but they have varying appearance, strength, beauty, and many other qualities such as were sketched out in our first chapter; and it is with such things as these that we are now to be concerned.

Are they prosaic? To begin with, there is the ever-present mystery of all the wonderful variety. We must take along with us through this chapter the questionings with which we set out, as to the cause of all the varied forms of life by which we are surrounded. The theory of evolution tells us of variation coming through natural selection, through a struggle for existence and a survival of the fittest. We know how, by artificial selection, many varieties of pigeons have been developed from the blue-rock. We know also how, by a like selection, many varied kinds of animals have been bred. In the vegetable world, it is interesting to note, for example, the various kinds of apples and pears given in John Evelyn's *Sylva*, and to compare their names with the long lists given in our catalogues to-day. Some that he names

we still have; but many are no longer grown: and artificial selection has added a veritable legion of new kinds. My own winter-stock of apples is mainly composed of a kind that has gone out of favour, and is steadily being ousted in my own orchard by newer and certainly better varieties. Such changes have been brought about by man's ingenious modification of nature to his own use. But what, we have asked before, is nature? What is natural selection? What selects? Or who selects? And to what end has been made the selection that has resulted in all the variety now existing? There is plenty of room here for imagination.

Again, we may proudly say that we no longer believe in the magical power of trees. No? Is there magic only if a twig of willow held in a man's hands will bend down over a place beneath which there is water? Is there no magic, no wonder, in the nutritive and curative relation of plants to animal life? Has cookery blinded us to the romantic fact that we eat roots, stalks, leaves, fruits and seeds? Because we have medicines in bottles, with Latin names on the labels, must we forget

that digitalis is distilled from foxglove-leaves, and salicin from willow-bark? I, at least, have been out in the fields with a doctor when he has gathered plants to use as medicine. This gets a little nearer to romance, perhaps, than the chemist's shop. We should probably have a sense of magic if we went out with an old woman, living all alone in a cottage by a wood, and watched her gathering herbs; then saw her brew them in a kettle swung over a fire; and later, in fear and trembling, drank some of the brew from a cracked willow-pattern tea-cup, and found that it really did lessen our rheumatic pains. But be the roots and fruits cooked or uncooked, be the concoction of herbs drunk from a measured medicine-glass or a cracked tea-cup, it is magic all along the line. So is the life of the trees, so are their varied forms and beauty. Let us, therefore, go happily on our way, not fearing that we are going to leave poetry for prose.

The various trees that will mostly concern us here, such as oak, ash, elm, yew and others, take us back so far that not only the memory but the history, legends and myths of man run not to the contrary. Through what long

ages must the slow changes have progressed that brought into existence all the varieties of trees now existing! It does not come within our scope to search the geological record. We must take it as read. Perhaps we know enough of it already for the imagination to be stirred. Those among us who are proudest of their lineage might envy the trees their ancestry. Have we not seen that our forefathers believed that men were descendants of the trees? In one sense they thought more truly than they knew. We may well walk reverently among the trees. Their life has been handed down to them from the days when there was no human eye to watch their growth, no human ear to listen to the rustling of their leaves in the wind.

This book is not a treatise. We are not concerned to draw up a list even of British trees alone, and formally to state their characteristics. No help is offered here to the tree-grower. We may take note of the use to which the wood of various trees can be put, though this is not essential to our main purpose. The tree has ceased to be a tree by the time it has become useful as timber. It

is not "of the essence" of the horse that his skin can be converted into leather, nor of a man that at last he may become food for worms. We need not avoid mention of the use of trees to man, but primarily we want to regard them as living their own life.

Man has, of course, modified the trees of the forest to his own use. As he has planted the corn thickly so that it may bear much fruit and grow but little leaf, so he has planted the fir and the pine alone so that they may grow masts for his ships, poles for his scaffolding, and—prosaic use—props for his coal-pits. Many a writer has contrasted the monotony of the useful plantation with the diversity of the natural forest. It is with the plantation that most of us have to be content, and with trees growing in small companies, singly, or in rows along the hedge or road-side. This is the country, not wild nature. But it is an approximation to wild nature. Anyhow we have little more than this close at hand. Our primeval forests have long been cleared. Here and there a fragment remains; but that is all. Still the woods are impressive. The vaulted abbey that man has wholly built becomes

deeply solemn to him. So do the woods, which he has but planted, nature doing the rest.

Writing of particular trees one almost inevitably begins with the oak; though the King of the forest holds its proud place in part through its mere serviceableness to man. Evelyn places it first when discoursing on forest-trees in his *Sylva*, and eloquently praises it for its useful qualities. "To enumerate now the incomparable uses of this wood," he says, "were needless: but so precious was the esteem of it, that of old there was an express law of the Twelve Tables concerning the very gathering of the acorns though they should be found fallen into another man's ground: The land and the sea do sufficiently speak for the improvement of this excellent material; houses and ships, cities and navies are built with it; and there is a kind of it so tough, and extremely compact, that our sharpest tools will hardly enter it, as scarcely the very fire itself, in which it consumes but slowly, as seeming to partake of a ferruginous and metallin shining nature proper for sundry robust uses. That which is twined, and a little wreathed (easily to be dis-

ANCIENT OAK, AND SILVER BIRCHES, IN SHERWOOD FOREST

cerned by the texture of the bark) is best to support burthens, for posts, columns, summers, etc., for all which our English oak is infinitely preferable to the French, which is nothing so useful, nor comparably so strong; insomuch as I have frequently admired at the sudden failing of most goodly timber to the eye, which being employed to these uses does many times most dangerously fly in sunder, as wanting that native spring, and toughness, which our English oak is endued withal." And so, after this inevitable patriotic note, he runs on; saying what kinds of oak-wood are best for shingles, pales, lathes, cooper's ware, clap-board, piles, and various other uses; and, after referring to the value of the mast for the fattening of hogs and deer, he says, regretfully, "the very acorns themselves were heretofore the food of men (as well as other productions of the earth) till their luxurious palates were debauched; and even in the Romans' time, the custom was in Spain to make a second service of acorns and mast (as the French do now of marrows and chestnuts) which they likewise used to roast under the embers".

Whether or not our palates are more debauched than were the palates of earlier days, we have not reverted to acorns as food; and the use of iron has driven out oak-wood, indeed wood of any kind, from some of the purposes it used to serve. His Majesty's navy is no longer dependent on forests of oak; and we read—with a smile or a sigh?—the lament with which Evelyn opens his book: "Since there is nothing which seems more fatally to threaten a weakening, if not a dissolution of the strength of this famous and flourishing nation, than the sensible and notorious decay of her wooden-walls, when either through time, negligence, or other accident, the present navy shall be worn out and impaired; it has been a very worthy and seasonable advertisement in the Honourable the principal Officers and Commissioners, what they have lately suggested to this illustrious society [The Royal Society] for the timely prevention and redress of this intolerable defect. For it has not been the late increase of shipping alone, the multiplication of glass-works, iron-furnaces, and the like, from whence this impolitic diminution of our timber has pro-

ceeded; but from the disproportionate spreading of tillage"—so runs the lament, to end with the warning that "this devastation is now become so epidemical, that unless some favourable expedient offer itself, and a way be seriously and speedily resolved upon, for the future repair of this important defect, one of the most glorious, and considerable bulwarks of this nation, will, within a short time, be totally wanting to it."

Our wooden bulwarks have proved their value many a time since Evelyn's day; and we are learning now that it is to our economic loss, if not to the national danger, that we let our land become deforested. But we are generalising, writing of what relates not to the oak alone, but to the whole company of serviceable trees.

Does the oak deserve its great reputation? This question may come to the reader with a shock, and suggest disloyalty, if not anarchism. Many old reputations have been lost in modern times. Even the claim of the lion to be considered the King of the beasts has been disputed. And the oak's pre-eminence among trees has been questioned. Philip Gilbert Hamerton, for

example, has challenged comparison between the oak and the Spanish chestnut, and, for himself, has decided in favour of the latter. In *Landscape* he says: "Since I cannot know the reader's favourite tree, it may be a pardonable egotism if I tell him which is mine. As the French monarch said, 'Ex omnibus floribus elegi mihi lilium,' so I would say, 'Ex omnibus arboribus elegi mihi castaneam'. My great admiration is for the Spanish chestnut-tree, at least in the way of sturdy and massive trees, but amongst light ones I am in love with the birch." He notes that the bark of the chestnut is more deeply furrowed than that of the oak, that the trunk is at least equally massive, that the branches are apparently mightier in proportion to the trunk, though they break off more easily in great tempests. The chestnut-leaf, he says, is finer in form and richer in colour than that of the oak, and the chestnut has also the advantage in both flower and fruit. The acorn is a food acceptable only to pigs: the chestnut is a food for human beings: in common use among the poor, and a delicacy for the rich.

Is it then merely through insular prejudice

that the indigenous oak holds a higher place in the general estimation than the imported chestnut? This cannot be, because, until the middle of the last century, the chestnut was believed to be indigenous like the oak. And in many lands the oak has the higher reputation. We have seen that it was the chosen tree for the oracle of Zeus; yet Greece is the old home of the chestnut, whence it passed to Italy and thence northwards. Probably the reputation of the oak is largely due to the quality of its wood. Hamerton admits that the boughs of the chestnut break off more easily than those of the oak. He thought, however, that the former was useful for timber, and shared the common but mistaken belief that the roof of Westminster Hall is of chestnut-wood. Alas! it has been definitely identified as Durmast oak—a variety of *Quercus robur*. Hamerton, again, says that the expression of the chestnut "is that of sturdy growth; his trunk and limbs are built not like those of Apollo, but like the trunk and limbs of Hercules". This is true; but it is truer still of the sinewy, tortuous-limbed oak, the sturdy appearance of which

is further increased by its wider reach in proportion to its height. The oak, it may be admitted, "loses points" with regard to leaf and flower. But how daintily shaped is the acorn! The chestnut is the more handsome tree; the oak the stronger, both in fact and in appearance. Is not this the conclusion of the whole matter?

In the course of the foregoing comparison we have said all that is needful about the Spanish or sweet chestnut. Botanists distinguish sharply between this tree and the horse-chestnut, which, as a splendidly limbed tree, with large handsome leaves, and fruit almost identical in appearance, has obvious resemblance to its namesake. It is a quick-growing tree, and its wood is not durable. If, in the garden, its spreading branches have to be cut short, they soon put out fresh, vigorous shoots. The large leaf, divided into seven differently sized leaflets, is singularly handsome—it was a great favourite, one may note in passing, of G. F. Watts, and appears in many of his paintings. No other of our larger trees bears such handsome flowers. In general form the tree is pyramidal, and often somewhat stiffly

symmetrical in outline. Like its namesake it is not indigenous in this country, having only been introduced as late, probably, as the middle of the sixteenth century.

The trees that we inevitably associate here with those already mentioned are such as the elm, the lime, the beech and the ash; and, after these, the larger willows. For we are regarding trees not from the scientific standpoint, but with respect, mainly, to variety of appearance. Therefore we group together those that are large, and, in their general shape, round and bossy, and which, when several of them are together, present a complex mass of stems, boughs and leafage.

The elms most frequently seen in this country are known as the wych elm and the common or small-leaved elm. The former is more widespreading in proportion to its height than the latter, which sends up a long, straight, central trunk; whereas the trunk of the wych elm divides off again and again. The common elm has, therefore, the more commanding appearance. Both have rough bark, and comparatively small leaves—the common elm, as its second name implies, having the smaller

ones. Hamerton notes that "the elm has an advantage over some other trees in showing its trunk and limbs well, even when enriched with abundant foliage," and that though the leaves are small, "the foliage is fine in mass, especially when many elms are seen together". Evelyn describes it as "a tree of consort, sociable, and so affecting to grow in company, that the very best I have ever seen do almost touch one another: this also protects them from the winds, and causes them to shoot of an extraordinary height; so as in little more than forty years they even arrive to a load of timber; provided they be sedulously and carefully cultivated, and the soil propitious. For an elm does not thrive so well in the forest, as where it may enjoy scope for the roots to dilate and spread in the sides, as in hedge-rows and avenues, where they have the air likewise free." He also says of it: "The elm is by reason of its aspiring and tapering growth (unless it be topped to enlarge the branches, and make them spread low) the least offensive to corn, and pasture-grounds, to both which, and the cattle, they afford a benign shade, defence and agreeable ornament". We have

here almost a description of Constable's picture, "The Cornfield".

Another name for the wych elm is mountain elm, but it is not in fact found at higher altitudes in this country than the common elm of which the Latin name is *Ulmus Campestris*. Both of them thrive best in the valleys. The wych elm is indigenous; the common elm came in with the Romans; so has more right than most of us to be regarded as a native.

Three varieties of the lime-tree are grown in this country, their claims to be indigenous being disputable, though the common lime is generally considered to be an importation. The differences between them are of minor importance and need not detain us. In general structure and appearance the lime resembles the elm, like which, though to a less extent, it shows its branches more than many other trees even when in full leaf. It has a smoother bark than the elm, and its leaves are of a broader heart shape. Mr. Step rightly says of it: "The large-leaved lime, growing in park-land or meadow, with its roots deep in good light loam, and its head eighty or ninety feet above . . . is a thing of beauty, and one

can stand long at its base looking up among the widespreading limbs so well clothed with leaves of fine texture and tint". It comes into leaf late, and loses its leaves early in the autumn.

Like the elm it has been much used for avenues. Evelyn praises it in this respect. "Is there," he asks, "a more ravishing, or delightful object than to behold some entire streets and whole towns planted with these trees, in even lines before their doors, so as they seem like cities in a wood? This is extremely fresh, and screens the houses both from winds, sun and dust; than which there can be nothing more desirable where streets are much frequented." One of the most famous streets in Europe, the *Unter den Linden* of Berlin, derives its name from this use of the tree. In connexion with this tree Evelyn has a cutting reference to some of his fellow-creatures. "Those royal plantations of these trees in the parks of Hampton Court and St. James's," he says, "will sufficiently instruct any man how these (and indeed all other trees which stand single) are to be governed, and defended from the injuries of beasts, and

sometimes more unreasonable creatures, till they are able to protect themselves." The lime is still a familiar tree in London parks. Those in St. James's Park are said to have been planted at the suggestion of Evelyn himself.

The wood of the lime is light and fine-grained, and is much employed by musical instrument makers. Grinling Gibbons used it for his elaborate carvings; thus has the tree entered into two arts.

The distinctive feature of the beech, to the mere observer, is its beautiful, smooth grey bark. "Beech-bark," says Hamerton, "seems to fit like a glove, having an appearance of neatness far surpassing that of the fissured barks, so that the rounded and swelling forms of the trunk and the great limbs approach nearer to the purity of well-formed human limbs than those of any other English tree." The play of light and shade on this smooth, rounded surface produces exquisite gradations of tone and colour.

It is a widespreading tree, luxuriant rather than noble in appearance; but its roots, gradually sloping from the bole, and finally entering the earth like great fingers, give it the appear-

ance of consciously holding a tenacious grip on the earth to balance the great expanse of branch and leafage above. It is known as "The Mother of Forests," because the drip from it destroys the weeds that exhaust the soil, which its leaves enrich when they fall; and which its shade protects from over-evaporation. The beech is a determined monopolist, a vigorous supplanter. Evelyn notes this. "That which I would observe to you from the wood at Wooton," he says, "is, that where goodly oaks grew, and were cut down by my grandfather almost a hundred years since, is now altogether beech; and where my brother has extirpated the beech, there rises birch. Under the beech spring up innumerable hollies, which growing thick and close together in one of the woods next the meadow, is a *viretum* all the year long, which is a very beautiful sight, when the leaves of the taller trees are fallen." Evidently the humble holly may be tolerated, but not the lordly oak. The beech roots in the surface soil, and robs the more deeply rooted oak of its food-supply. It is only a mother-tree if not allowed to have too much of its own way.

An avenue of beeches is very impressive, the big, wide-reaching boughs, bending away from the main stems, and mingling at their extremities, give a great sense of power. To enter such an avenue—I have one in mind, through which I often pass—is to have the same feeling with which one enters a vaulted cathedral: the unfamiliar size of familiar objects producing an effect of vast spaciousness greater than that of the open air.

It is sufficient, perhaps, just to mention the hornbeam, which is often mistaken for the beech, though closer acquaintance with bark, leaves and flowers discloses considerable differences.

The sycamore or great maple is an imported tree that has not obtained a high reputation. Evelyn dismisses it in a few lines, mostly depreciatory, and including an unfavourable comparison with a foreign variety. "The sycamore," he says, "is much more in reputation for its shade than it deserves; for the leaves which fall early (like those of the ash) turn to mucilage, and putrify with the first moisture of the season; so as they contaminate and mar our walks, and are therefore

(by my consent) to be banished from all curious gardens and avenues. There is in Germany a better sort of sycamore than ours, wherewith they make saddle-trees, and divers other things of use; our own is excellent for cart and plough-timber, being light, tough, and not much inferior to ash itself." But for this last reservation in its favour, the tree, had it a spirit—any spirit—would surely have taken umbrage at this criticism and have left the country. But it has remained, and there is a remarkably beautiful specimen of it within a few yards of my own door, and I never pass it, though this often happens several times a day, without feeling grateful for its stately loveliness. It branches out almost evenly on all sides, and has a firm outline not unpleasantly symmetrical, because of a slight inclination of the whole tree under pressure of the prevailing wind. Its trunk, owing to the scaling-off of the bark, is mingled of green and brown and delicate grey tints. Whatever fault may be found with the leaves of this tree when they have fallen, their five lobes make them a pleasant variety, part-way between the simple leaves of such trees as the elm and the beech,

and the divided leaflets of the horse-chestnut. Its flowers, long hanging racemes, are very effective. Gilbert White is kinder to the tree than Evelyn. He has a note: "May 12. The sycamore, or great maple, is in bloom, and, at this season, makes a beautiful appearance, and affords much pabulum for bees, smelling strongly like honey. The foliage of the tree is very fine, and very ornamental to outlets. All the maples have saccharine juices." This is an *amende honorable* for Evelyn's earlier depreciation.

The walnut is one of the finest and most valuable of our imported trees. It has travelled westwards from the Himalayas. The Romans regarded its nuts as food for the gods, and called them *Jovis glans*, the nut of Jove, whence the tree derives its Latin name *Juglans regia*. "The walnut," says Evelyn, "delights in a dry, sound and rich land; especially if it incline to a feeding chalk or marl; and where it may be protected from the cold; as in great pits, valleys, and highway-sides; also in stony grounds, and on hills specially chalky: likewise in cornfields: Thus Burgundy abounds with them, where they stand in the midst of goodly

wheat-lands at sixty and an hundred foot distance; and it is so far from hurting the crop, that they look on them as a great preserver, by keeping the ground warm; nor do the roots hinder the plough. Whenever they fell a tree (which is only the old and decayed) they always plant a young one near him; and in several places 'twixt Hanau and Frankfort in Germany, no young farmer whatsoever is permitted to marry a wife, till he bring proof that he hath planted, and is a father of such a stated number of walnut trees, as the law is inviolably observed to this day for the extraordinary benefit which this tree affords the inhabitants: And in truth, were this timber in greater plenty amongst us, we should have far better utensils of all sorts for our houses, as chairs, stools, bed-steads, tables, wainscot cabinets, etc., instead of the more vulgar beech, subject to the worm, weak and unsightly."

The walnut was introduced into Britain in the sixteenth century. Gerarde was well acquainted with it. The name seems to be derived from the German *Wallnuss*. Hamerton says it may rank after the chestnut in some of the most important qualities of beauty; and

he praises its round, strong trunk, large branches, "thrown out far with a superb gesture," whitish grey bark, of beautiful tint, and rugged texture. It has large, handsome leaves, not dissimilar to those of the ash—part way, it may be said, between those of the ash and those of the sycamore. They are dark green in colour. The superb gesture of the branches, of which Hamerton speaks, is due to their many minor changes of direction, which gives them quite the appearance of flinging themselves out. Hamerton will not have it that the fruit is equal to that of the chestnut. It is only a luxury, a mere dessert nut. The chestnut affords sustenance as well as pleasure. This is a democratic sentiment that ought to be applauded in these days. Walnuts and wine have only aristocratic associations. The tree is chiefly valued for its fruit; though the wood is much in use for furniture. The leaves have an aroma which some people find pleasant and others unpleasant. To end with a remark upon its general appearance, few trees are so handsome, and, at the same time, so picturesque.

The plane-tree is more easily mistaken for

the sycamore than the hornbeam for the beech; the alternative name for the sycamore, false plane, being due to a confusion of the two trees by the Scots. The plane is an exotic, but has made itself quite at home, particularly in London, where it thrives better than any other tree. This fact has given the tree an important place in modern art; for the impressionists have discovered that there is in London, in its streets, avenues and parks, almost inexhaustible material for pictures; and the plane, therefore, is often to be seen in painting and drawing. There are two varieties, distinguished by minor differences, and known as the oriental and the occidental plane. The former is the kind most generally seen in London. Evelyn speaks of it as "the incomparable and shady Platanus, that so beautiful and precious tree which we read the Romans brought out of the Levant, and cultivated with so much industry and cost, for its stately and proud head only; that they would irrigate them with wine instead of water; and so prized the very shadow of it, that when afterwards they transplanted them into France, they exacted a tribute of any of the natives

who should presume to put his head under it. Pliny tells us there is no tree whatsoever which so well defends us from the heat of the sun in summer, nor that admits it more kindly in winter." Evelyn laments that, in his time, there was but little success in growing this tree in England. No such lament could be made nowadays.

The ash and the silver birch should perhaps be mentioned together. Probably many would hesitate to say which was the more beautiful of the two; but there would be few to say that, of our common trees, the choice, for beauty, did not lie between them. The ash has the statelier, the silver birch the more delicate beauty. Ruskin says there is no lovelier tree in the world than the common ash. Hamerton says of it: "The ash is one of the most graceful trees we have, especially when ornamented by her 'keys' in the early months of the year. The toughness and strength of her wood, and its extraordinary weight, are not at all suggested by the elegant outward appearance of the tree, as the same qualities are by the stout and rugged character of the oak. The ash resembles some decep-

tive feminine organisations that attract admiration for beauty, whilst nobody suspects the toughness and resisting power with which the graceful being is armed against the difficulties of existence. The foliage of the ash is light and pretty in small quantities, and masses handsomely when there is an abundance of it."

The "keys" here mentioned are samaras, or seed-vessels, which hang from the branches in clusters. The foliage of the ash, when seen from a distance, has an indistinct appearance, due to the subdivision of the leaf into numerous leaflets, and this gives to the tree much of its lightness of effect. Another element of its gracefulness is the smallness of the angle at which the branches divide off from each other. Branch parts gradually from branch, and all seem to be united in harmonious relations.

We have seen that, according to the Scandinavian mythology, the first man was made out of an ash, and the first woman out of an elm. The appearance of the two trees would suggest to us the reverse attribution. Odin and his brothers must have been too wise to

judge by appearances, and must have been guided by the toughness of the wood of the ash. Doubtless the fact that spear-shafts were made of ash-wood determined the choice of those who invented Odin and his doings. Evelyn descants on the use of the ash—the most universal, he says, next to that of the oak—to the soldier, the carpenter, wheelwright, cartwright, cooper, turner and thatcher. He is silent as to its beauty. But his *Sylva* was written, we must remember, mainly with a utilitarian purpose.

Not even the delicate beauty of the silver birch draws from him any eloquent passage. He notes that "though birch be of all other the worst of timber; yet has it its various uses, as for the husbandman's ox-yokes; also for hoops, paniers, brooms, wands, bavin and fuel," etc. He has much to say about the virtues of the water of the tree. We must not follow him along this doubtful path; but his introduction to the subject is worth quoting, if only as giving his general opinion of the tree. "I should here add the uses of the water too," he says, "had I not already protested against tampering with the medicinal virtues of

trees, in the entrance of this treatise. But if the sovereign effects of the juice of this despicable tree supply its other defects (which makes some judge it unworthy to be brought into the catalogue of woods to be propagated), I may for once be permitted to play the empiric, and to gratify our laborious woodman with a draught of his own liquor: And the rather, because these kind of secrets are not yet sufficiently cultivated; and ingenious planters would by all means be encouraged to make more trials of this nature, as the Indians, and other nations, have done on their palms, and trees of several kinds, to their great emolument."

Evelyn notes that the birch can accommodate itself to almost any kind of soil, "which cannot be too barren," he says, "for it will thrive in the dry, and the wet, sand and stony, marshes and bogs; the water-galls and fuliginous roots of forests that hardly bear any grass, do many times spontaneously produce it in abundance whether the place be high, or low, and nothing comes amiss to it".

I am most familiar with it as a fringe round plantations of Scots pine; and either in summer

SILVER BIRCHES, NORWAY

or winter it looks singularly beautiful against the dark background they make for it. In travelling through the pine-forests of Germany I have felt almost as if I were at home in Cheshire, when I have seen it on their borders.

It was Coleridge who called it "the Lady of the Woods". Few pictures have become more popular through reproduction than the one of a group of birches to which the painter, Mr. McWhirter, gave the title "The Three Graces". Hamerton, as we have already seen, thought it the most beautiful of our lighter trees. "The birch is always beautiful in herself," he says, "and not the least beautiful in winter, when all her light, woody structure is distinctly visible, from the silvery trunk to the dark purple sprays. In spring her light green foliage strikes the eye as crude, but in autumn the thinly scattered little leaves of pale gold tell with the greatest brilliance amongst the darker shades of the forest, and the whiteness of the stems is brilliant against the russets and purples and dark greys." Its stem he declares to be one of the masterpieces of Nature. "Everything has been done to heighten its unrivalled brilliance. The horizontal peeling of the bark,

making dark rings at irregular distances, the brown spots, the dark colour of the small twigs, the rough texture near the ground, and the exquisite silky smoothness of the tight white bands above, offer exactly that variety of contrast which makes us feel a rare quality like that smooth whiteness as strongly as we are capable of feeling it."

In our islands the birch is most commonly associated with the scenery of Scotland, where it often stands out in marked contrast to a background of moor or mountain; or we look from the mountain-side, between the gleaming stems and network of branches, at the still, dark waters of the loch far below. It is in fact particularly a northern tree. It is the most common tree throughout the Russian Empire, and is the only tree in Greenland. We have seen how robust is the graceful ash. The fragile-looking birch is most at home where the strongest-looking trees, indeed the strongest in fact, will not grow. Evelyn's contempt for it, on utilitarian grounds, would not be understood in Northern lands. The Canadians—as every schoolboy knows—make their canoes of its bark; of

which, also, the peasants of Sweden and Lapland make shingles to cover their houses. Nearer home, the Highlanders put it to many uses. Loudon says that of it "they build their houses, make their beds, chairs, tables, dishes and spoons; construct their mills; make their carts, ploughs, harrows, gates, and fences, and even manufacture ropes of it. The branches are employed as fuel in the distillation of whisky; the spray is used for smoking hams and herrings, for which last purpose it is preferred to every other kind of wood. The bark is used for tanning leather, and sometimes, when dried and twisted into a rope, instead of candles. The spray is used for thatching houses: and, dried in summer, with the leaves on, makes a good bed where heath is scarce."

Hardy, though so delicate in appearance, it is clear that this tree, which has received, as we have seen, the poetic title "the Lady of the Woods," might also be known by such a prosaic, but not less honourable title as "the Maid of all Work". We have not dwelt much here on the useful qualities of trees. But it seemed well to do so in this case, as the useful-

ness of the birch, in lands where other trees are wanting, may make us feel additionally free fully to enjoy its beauty.

The willow and the alder are particularly associated with the stream-side. One ought to say the willows rather than the willow; for of no other kind of tree have we so many varieties. Mr. Step says that "even so hardened a botanist as Sir J. D. Hooker, in reviewing the tangle of species, varieties (natural and cultivated), and hybrids, is so far stirred from his ordinary composure that he stigmatises it as a 'troublesome genus'." We are not botanists here, but ordinary people wishful to have at least a nodding acquaintance with the more conspicuous trees, and some appreciation of their picturesque beauty. We shall not therefore venture where a Hooker almost feared to tread. But before dealing with the willows descriptively, it is almost impossible to refrain from some reference to their association with sadness.

There is material here for a considerable essay, a reflection suggesting the remark that I have timorously avoided anything like systematic reference to the mention of trees

in literature, as too large a task for inclusion within the narrow limits of a small book. But a brief note of such mention of the willow is almost a necessity.

As we look at the tree we can find no reason, in its mere appearance, why it should be linked with sadness. Such association with the sombre yew and cypress presents no difficulty. But the willow has a cheerful aspect. Literature only gives us partial help. It proves the association to be widespread and of long standing. Here, as in many other things, we find that our attitude has been determined by the Bible. To the Jews the willow was at one time an emblem of joy. At the institution of the feast of tabernacles, the children of Israel received the command, "ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days". The very words "willows of the brook" seem to have a joyous sound, and one can well understand that this would be so in the East, where river or spring means the difference between fertility and barrenness. Even the

Northern modern poet, Tennyson, can refer to the willow with no suggestion of melancholy:—

> Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
> Little breezes dusk and shiver
> Thro' the wave that runs for ever
> By the island in the river
> Flowing down to Camelot.

But it is in the Old Testament that the note of sadness is already struck, yet for a reason that has no relation to the natural suggestiveness of the tree—quite the opposite, in fact. The passage hardly needs to be recalled; but its great beauty invites us to quote it once more: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth." It would have been natural to be joyous by the waters of Babylon, which made the country around the great city one of the most fertile regions in the whole world. But the Jews were captives there; and could not be glad where everything most invited to gladness. So the most beautiful place may lose all its fascination for

us, may, indeed, become intolerable to us, if it have been the scene of some great sorrow. And this sadness of the Jews, in a paradise of beauty and fruitfulness, seems to be the reason why we, even now, associate the willow with sadness.

But even to those who have not been influenced by the biblical tradition the willow has been a symbol of sorrow, and funeral torches were wont to be made from it. Do we find a reason for this in that variety of the tree which we know as the weeping-willow, and in which we certainly do see a natural suggestion of sadness? This variety, indeed, is known as the Babylonian willow. I do not know which, name or story, is cause, here, and which consequence. The reader need only be reminded, further, that Shakespeare sends poor Ophelia to her death where

> There is a willow grows aslant a brook
> That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;

and that Desdemona says:—

> My mother had a maid called Barbara:
> She was in love; and he she loved proved mad,
> And did forsake her; she had a song of "Willow";
> An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune,
> And she died singing it.

Even this weight of tradition makes it difficult for us to have other than pleasant thoughts in looking at a willow. The weeping-willow itself is singularly graceful. It in no wise peculiarly belongs to the banks of the Euphrates, but is native to Japan and other parts of Asia. The large varieties with which we are most familiar, the white willow, so called from the character of its leaves, and the crack willow, a name due to its brittle branches and twigs—which often litter my garden after a storm—are valuable "assets" to the landscape painter, the long narrow leaves, one of the chief peculiarities of the willow tribe, reflecting the light so brokenly that the trees, even more than the ash, have the appearance of being seen through a gauzy veil. This, as we shall note hereafter, is a quality that appeals to the latest school of landscape painting more than it could appeal to the earlier ones, which saw beauty mainly in mass of colour and light and shade, or marvellous detail, and had little love for the more subtle effects of light. Thus the Rev. W. Gilpin, brother of Sawrey Gilpin, the animal painter, who wrote about picturesque beauty, thought little of the pictorial value of the willow,

POLLARD WILLOWS

"except as pollards, to characterise a marshy country; or to mark in a second distance the winding banks of a heavy, low-sunk river, which could not otherwise be noticed". Those who have painted in such a river-valley will appreciate this secondary use of the willow. Still, Gilpin was not wholly blind to its beauty, for he says: "Some willows, indeed, I have thought beautiful, and fit to appear in the decoration of any rural scene. The kind I have most admired has a small narrow leaf, and wears a pleasant, light, sea-green foliage, which mixes agreeably with foliage of a deeper hue. I am not acquainted with the botanical name of this species, but I believe the botanists call it *Salix alba.*" This air of indifference to botanical accuracy, while the right botanical name is given, none the less, is delightful in its way. Probably the botanist would say that it is quite characteristic of the mere lover of the picturesque!

Of the many other varieties of the willow there can be no mention here; though an exception ought to be made, perhaps, in favour of the osier, grown at times as a pollard, and more commonly seen in the osier beds, which

often add picturesqueness to low-lying river land. Needless to say, the osier is in great demand for basket-making. The "note" of the willow is pliancy, and the very name, connected, it is said, etymologically with "willing," emphasises the quality that makes it so valuable to the basket-weaver.

The alder was named as another denizen of the stream-side, and Tennyson's apostrophe to the rivulet inevitably comes to mind:—

> But here will sigh thine alder tree,
> And here thine aspen shiver;
> And here by thee will hum the bee,
> For ever and for ever.

It is not, as a rule, a large tree; its timber has no great value; nor has it much reputation for beauty. It earns most of such repute as it possesses because it is commonly to be found in places otherwise picturesque. Thus Gilpin associates it with the sweet vales of Dorking and Mitcham and the groves of Esher. Hamerton says that "few trees obtrude themselves so little on our notice. One cannot pass a chestnut or a willow without being immediately aware of its species, but however familiar we may be with alders, we can think of them

simply as trees or bushes without noticing them unless there is some special reason for doing so." To this the alder might reply meekly, yet with force, that although it may have no special beauty, it helps to make our valleys much more beautiful than they would be without its aid.

The trees we have noted so far are those that give general character to our landscape in most parts of the country. They form the staple of our woods and parks; they are the most familiar trees by our road-sides, and in the hedgerows that divide our fields. They are massy in form, and have a rounded outline. They give to a well-wooded country, if seen from a slight eminence, a billowy appearance. The trees we have now to study are more rarely to be seen, and are different in form.

First among them we take the poplar, which, like the willow and the alder, thrives best in the valleys—it is, in fact, so the botanists tell us, closely related to the willow. Two varieties, the white poplar, which is indigenous in this country, and the black poplar, which is an importation, come near to the majority of

our trees in general form; but are angular and irregular in outline, and send up long stems which show, almost gauntly, through the somewhat scanty foliage. The variety that we most commonly associate with the name is the Lombardy poplar, so called in France and England because, though an immigrant into Southern Europe from the Taurus and the Himalayas by way of Persia, it has taken most kindly to the river-banks of Northern Italy. It was only introduced into this country as late as the middle of the eighteenth century. It was unknown, therefore, to Evelyn's England, and he can only quote Virgil—

Populus in fluviis,

and say "The black poplar grows rarely with us; it is a stronger and taller tree than the white, the leaves more dark and not so ample. Diverse stately ones of these I remember about the banks of Po in Italy, which river being the old Eridanus so celebrated by the poets in which the temerarious Phaëton is said to have been precipitated, doubtless gave argument to that fiction of his sad sisters' metamorphosis into these trees; but for the

amber of their precious tears I could hear of no such matter, whiles passing down that river towards Ferrara I diverted myself with this story of the ingenious poet." We have seen that the story was not invented, but only made use of by the poet; and to-day, we may be reminded of it by the sight of many a Lombardy poplar by English river-sides.

Hamerton says that the poplar is to other trees what a tower, in architecture, is to houses. The comparison, of course, is obvious. We can agree with him also when he says that the poplars, again like towers, are seen to best advantage when there are but one or two of them among trees of lower elevation and fuller form, thus "carrying the beauty of the sylvan world high into the air". This is the effect they most commonly have in this country, and it is one that gives so much pleasure as to lay us under a debt of gratitude to Lord Rochford, who introduced them here. They vary much in beauty. Some are gaunt and spare, others are fuller, and throw out waving plumes like pinnacles around a central spire crowning a broad-based tower.

The aspen is an indigenous variety of poplar;

and the mention of it reminds us of a chief peculiarity of all the trees of this genus. The leaves are broad, and are attached to the branches by long leaf-stems; hence they tremble with the lightest breath of air. Tennyson's "aspens shiver" has already been quoted; and we inevitably call to mind also the lines in "Mariana":—

> Hard by a poplar shook alway,
> All silver-green with gnarled bark:
> For leagues no other tree did mark
> The level waste, the rounding gray.

The great family of the conifers, to which we now come, is but poorly represented in our islands by trees that we can claim as indigenous. We have only the Scots pine, the yew and the juniper. But the Scots pine alone is a host in itself. However tame a countryside may be a Scots pine gives it a note of wild grandeur. It seems to say to us that though everything about us may have been subdued by the sober rule of economic agriculture, there are still places, to which we can travel in swift thought, where nature has not yet become a mere handmaid of man.

The mere mention of the tree, much more

the sight of it, suffices to carry one away to the Scottish Highlands. When it is seen dominating the billowy masses of the trees of the English lowlands, it may be compared to Highland cattle confined with shorthorns in an English field. In Mr. Peter Graham's well-known picture, "A Spate in the Highlands," the pines, relics doubtless of a primeval forest, such as one sees in Scotland, are like the shaggy, tawny cattle at large on the moor or in the glen. In this picture, a clump of pines, in the middle distance, stands like the remnant of an army making a last, desperate defence. In the foreground, the roots of one that has fallen before the gale, gleam ghastly white, like bleaching bones.

Evelyn, evidently, had not seen the pine amid its most fitting surroundings. His first-hand knowledge of trees and their habitats seems to have been confined to what he could see in England and in such countries as were included in the conventional grand tour. Thus he says: "The worst land in Wales bears (as I am told) large pine"; and, again: "In Scotland there is a most beautiful sort of fir growing upon the mountains; of which from that un-

happy person the late Marquess of Argyle I had sent me some seeds, which I have sown with tolerable success". The character of the geologic science of his day receives a curious illustration when he says, "That the fir and pine will prosper well with us is more than probable, because it is a kind of demonstration that they did heretofore grow plentifully in Cumberland, Cheshire, Stafford and Lancashire, where multitudes of them are to this day found intire, buried under the earth, though supposed to have been overthrown and covered so ever since the universal Deluge: for we will not trouble our planter with M. Cambden's query, whether there be not subterraneous trees growing under the ground? though something to be touched anon might seem to excuse the presumption of it; besides that divers earths, as well as waters, have evidently a quality of petrifying wood buried therein". The "something to be touched anon" was a tree-fossil, found in a Roman quarry, which occasioned much discussion.

In this passage we get into touch with Gerarde, who says, similarly: "I have seen these trees growing in Cheshire, Staffordshire

and Lancashire, where they grew in great plenty, as it is reported, before Noah's flood, but then being overflowed and overwhelmed, have been since in the mosses and watery moorish grounds, very sound and fresh until this day; and so full of a resinous substance that they burn like a torch or link, and the inhabitants of those countries do call it Firre wood and Fire wood unto this day". Those of us whose home is in any of the counties mentioned above, know, at this later day, to our great satisfaction, that the Scots pine will thrive in them.

It is not, we have to say, before leaving Evelyn for the time, the picturesque value of the pine and fir that moves him, but the practical consideration, also hinted at in the passage just quoted from Gerarde, that gum, resin and tar can be obtained from them!

The picturesque value of the tree, which Evelyn ignores, is due to the rough-barked, ruddy-hued stem and branches, and to the sombre-hued needle-shaped leaves. The branches also are tortuous and sinewy-looking, and the growth of the tree is irregular. We usually see it with the mere stumps left of

the lower branches, which adds to its rugged battle-worn look. When the light of the setting sun shines on the stem and larger branches they turn to a deep crimson, and glow as with an inward fire.

The name we give to this tree must not mislead us into thinking of it as exclusively or mainly a Scotch tree, doubtfully indigenous also in England. It is the commonest of pine-trees in Northern Europe. There are vast forests of it in Russia and Germany. In Scandinavia and Lapland it is also completely at home. Need the reader be reminded of Milton's choosing the tallest of Norwegian pines as the mere wand compared with the spear which Satan used "to support uneasy steps over the burning marl"?

Most of us, probably, are familiar with the resinous odour of pine and fir-trees; and the mention of this leads to the note that a pleasurable scent only exceptionally, as in the case of the flowering limes, enters into the enjoyment the larger trees afford us.

The second of our indigenous conifers, the yew, is a tree the associations of which might detain us long. Evelyn regrets that, already,

in his days, "since the use of bows is laid aside amongst us," the propagation of the yew-tree, or eugh-tree as he spells it, is "quite forborn". Writing for utilitarian ends, he links the yew and the box together, and says of the former that "the neglect of it is to be deplored; seeing that (besides the rarity of it in Italy and France, where but little of it grows) the barrenest grounds and coldest of our mountains might be profitably replenished with them. I say, profitably, for besides the use of the wood for bows the forementioned artists in box most gladly employ it. And for the cogs of mills, posts to be set in moist grounds, and everlasting axle-trees, there is none to be compared with it, likewise for the bodies of lutes, thearbas, etc., yea, and for tankards to drink out of, whatever Pliny report of its shade, and fatal fruit in Spain, France and Arcadia."

The shade and fruit of the yew he declares himself to have tried frequently, without any deadly or noxious results; and his desire that the tree shall be more extensively grown draws him on into eloquent praise both of it and of the box on quite other than utilitarian grounds.

"He that in winter should behold some of our highest hills in Surrey clad with whole woods of these two last sort of trees, for divers miles in circuit, (as in those delicious groves of them, belonging to the Honourable my noble friend Sir Adam Brown of Beech-worth Castle, from Box-hill, and near our famous mole or swallow) might without the least violence to his imagination, easily fancy himself transported into some new or enchanted country; for, if in any spot of England,

> Hic ver perpetuum, atque alienis mensibus æstas.
> —'Tis here
> Eternal spring, and summer all the year."

Two modern literary references to the character of the yew-tree may not be passed over here. The first is Wordsworth's poem descriptive of the "Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale," and those "worthier still of note," the

> fraternal four of Borrowdale,
> Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
> Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
> Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
> Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved;
> Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks
> That threaten the profane;—a pillared shade,
> Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,

Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked
With unrejoicing berries—ghostly shapes
May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton
And Time the Shadow;—there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
United worship; or in mute repose
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

Wordsworth, in these lines, not only accurately describes the yew-tree, but expresses the effect that its structure and appearance have on his feelings. Then—and here the immemorial years of the trees come in to suggest what again is feeling rather than mere fancy—he peoples its shade with the ghosts of what humanity experiences as the years pass by; and the vast reaches of time, through which the trees have lived, are vividly suggested by the ghosts being made, when in mute repose, to listen to the mountain-stream whose murmurs by long ages preceded the sighing of the winds through the yew-grove, even in its earliest years.

For one more literary reference to the yew we turn to Tennyson's "In Memoriam". In

the first overwhelming rush of his grief he makes the tree absolutely changeless, which, as he shows later in the poem, it is not. At first he says, apostrophising the yew:—

O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
Who changest not in any gale,
Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom.

This is what might be said about the yew by any one who had never observed it closely. But Tennyson did observe closely; and later in the poem he notes that the yew does change, yet not so as for more than for a brief time to pass from its gloom:—

Old warder of these buried bones,
And answering now my random stroke
With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest towards the dreamless head,
To thee too comes the golden hour
When flower is feeling after flower;
But Sorrow—fixt upon the dead,

And darkening the dark graves of men
What whispered from her lying lips?
Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,
And passes into gloom again.

I have quoted the stanza in full, because the last two lines are descriptive of the yew, as well as the first two verses. The new season's leaves are a lighter green, and grow dark later on. "The fruitful cloud and living smoke" is the pollen, which the poet's random stroke shakes from the male flowers, and some of which will settle on the female flowers—usually on a separate tree—and fertilise them. Thus, early in the year, in February and March, in the yew-trees, "flower is feeling after flower".

But these incidents of the life of the tree, so important to the tree itself, produce but little effect on its general appearance, which is one of changeless, solemn gloom. The yew apostrophised by Tennyson is in a churchyard, where the branches seem to grasp at the head-stones, and the roots are wrapped about the bones beneath the soil. Again the description is closely accurate. What reader is not familiar with many a churchyard yew? One after another, as I pause for a moment from writing, they come to my mind. Is it only because its sombre green was thought appropriate to the place that it has so often been planted among the graves? The very reverse of this has

been suggested: that, in the far past, the dead were buried amid the yew-trees because their great length of life was regarded as a symbol of immortality. It was an old custom to place branches of the yew beneath the body in the grave. Probably the reader will at once have thought of the practices arising out of the imitative magic and the tree-worship detailed in our second chapter. Many churchyard yews are almost certainly older than Christianity, and churches were built on sites already held sacred because the dead were buried, and we must recollect, were believed still to be living, there. The churchyard yew, whatever theory we may adopt, is a link with the prehistoric past.

If our far-off ancestors did associate the yew-tree with the continuance or revival of life after death, it must have suggested brighter thoughts to them than to us. Yet we think of the use of its strong, flexible wood for the English long-bow exultantly rather than sadly; though the bow was an instrument of death. We may not care to see formal hedges of yew, or the tree cut into the shape of a peacock or a pigeon-cote. But if we dis-

like these things, it is not of the tree but of the human maimer of it that we think sadly. A yew-tree in a garden is a source of pleasure. Both in its structure, and in its sombre hue, it is a valuable contrast to the other trees. In many a landscape the tree strikes a rich, deep note, not sad, but solemn. The other trees look all the brighter for the presence of the yew; and we need not regard it as a kind of misanthrope among trees, looking on sourly at the gaiety of its youthful companions. It would be the meanest of trees—pardon the animism—if, having the gift of long life, it envied its fellows the gaiety of their shorter life.

Nor, though its leaves are poisonous to cattle, are its berries poisonous to mankind. We have seen that Evelyn enjoyed both its shade and its fruit. It is a tree of such strong, individual character, that we are not surprised to find Hamerton echoing Evelyn's regret that it is not more extensively cultivated—for its own sake, not for the sake only of any use to which its timber may be put.

In connexion with it Mr. Edward Step makes a suggestion of a kind that will be more fully discussed in a later chapter; but pass-

ing reference may be made to it here. "Thousands see in cathedral aisles," he says, "the reproduction in stone of the pine-forest or the beech-wood. Standing before an ancient yew they may see whence came the idea for those clustered columns. They actually exist in the bole of the yew, which presents the appearance not of a single trunk, but of several trunks that have coalesced." Unfortunately for this theory, our Gothic architecture has been evolved, little by little, and, as to its structure, with a severely utilitarian purpose, from earlier styles of building hardly at all suggestive of the forest-glade—but more of this hereafter. We may not be able to accept the theory here advanced; but, none the less, we may rightly admire the clustered stems of the yew-tree bole.

Our third indigenous conifer is the juniper; it is rarely more than a few feet in height: a shrub rather than a tree; but, as Hamerton says, wherever it occurs, "it is valuable in the landscape for its own special quality of green, and for the texture and density of its peculiar foliage".

Of exotic conifers the number now grown in

SPRUCE FIRS

this country is legion, and they are conspicuous features in many a landscape. It is beyond our scope even merely to mention any considerable number of them. For the most part they resemble the Scots pine and the yew in affording a contrast to the main body of our indigenous trees. Most of them send up a single, lofty stem, from which the branches, approaching a horizontal direction, especially in the lower part of the tree, and diminishing in length according to their height, give to the whole structure an acutely pyramidal form. Such are the spruce fir, the silver fir, and the Douglas fir. The spruce fir, when quite young, is familiar to us as the Christmas tree—itself a recent importation from Germany. All these trees, and all the other conifers with one exception, to be named immediately, are evergreen; and aid to mitigate the bareness—not without its own peculiar beauty—of our winter landscape.

The larch should perhaps be singled out for more particular mention. It is the one conifer that loses its leaves in winter, and it is then the barest-looking of all our trees. It had not been long enough in England in Evelyn's day

for him to have become familiar with it. "That which grows somewhere about Chelmsford in Essex," he says, "does sufficiently reproach our negligence and want of industry." It must indeed have sorely grieved the economic side of Evelyn that a tree, of which he had read of beams 120 feet in length being made, should through lack of industry not be grown in England. Its wood, however, does not harden as well in our mild, moist climate, as in countries where the winters are more severe. Still, it develops well enough to be of great use, and vast numbers of larches have been planted since Evelyn's time, particularly in Scotland.

It is an Alpine tree, and looks and is most at home among the mountains and the hills. Like the Scots pine it strikes a wild note in the average lowland landscape. An aged, ragged specimen, in the roadside hedgerow, near to my house, looks like a tramp resting on a journey to or from the North. One almost expects to hear it ask for a bawbee.

Though the larch is bare of leaves in winter, a larch-wood, at that time, looks very beautiful when the sun shines through its maze of grey-brown twigs and branches. In spring, it puts

on, as Hamerton playfully says, a garb conformable "to the pretty spring fashions when light green is 'so generally worn';" and then "the very air of a larch-wood seems to be suffused with a delicate green light that seems rather to emanate from the innumerable multitudes of thin short leaves than to be only their colouring matter". It is at this time, also, that its flowers are to be seen, the "rosy plumelets," as Tennyson calls them.

Such are the trees that we most commonly see; those that are most in evidence in our British landscape. They are all neighbours and friends of my own. Most of them I see every day, and am always glad to see them, which is more than most of us can say of all our human neighbours—or they, let us humbly say, of us. At night, when in the house, I like to think of the trees as gathered round it. Sometimes they give no sound, at other times the wind gives voice to them; and in the storm the sound rises and falls until one could fancy it was the sound of breakers on the shore. But there are other trees that we see, though less frequently; and we must not pass them by wholly unnoticed. We ought not, perhaps, to

leave unmentioned the humble bushes, without which our landscape would be less fair. But we shall have to content ourselves with incidental reference to some of the most interesting of them in a later chapter.

The stone pine is a conifer that rarely becomes more than a bush in this country. Travellers in Italy know it well; and many who have never seen it in nature, have made its acquaintance in art, particularly in Turner's Italian landscapes, for he delights to use its massive head as a foil to the limpid azure of the sky; though, as Ruskin points out, he often gives to it something of the character of the Scots pine. In its native haunts, the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, it is a large tree. Mr. Edward Step says, "it must be confessed that the stone pine is less beautiful than picturesque, a point that strongly recommends it to the landscape painter". The distinction made here between the beautiful and the picturesque is a useful one; only it might be urged that the latter is a phase of the former. But this is merely a question of terms. Tumble-down buildings may be picturesque. Perhaps, for distinction's sake, we should re-

serve the word beautiful for buildings that are fine examples of the builder's art. Anyhow, the stone pine is certainly picturesque, with its deeply fissured, thick-set, reddish stem; its wide-stretching arms bearing plume-like tufts of rich green foliage. Not the least valuable of its qualities, in a hot country, both to the artist and to mankind in general, is the welcome shade it affords. The suggestion of shade is pleasant in a sunny picture; it is more than pleasant in the reality of southern sunshine. The stone pine is one of nature's sunshades, and the form of our artificial ones might have been suggested by it.

In *Modern Painters* Ruskin mentions together "the spire of the cypress, and flaked breadth of the cedar, the rounded head of the stone pine, and perfect pyramid of the black spruce". The spruce has already been mentioned here. Ruskin calls it a pine, which is a mistake according to strict botanical classification. In art it is made familiar to us by pictures of mountain, particularly Swiss, scenery; and it appealed strongly to Turner's keen interest in the struggle of trees to maintain themselves under adverse conditions. Of

this there will be more to be said in a later chapter. The common cypress, solemn-looking both in form and the sombre hue of its evergreen foliage, is an exotic that counts for little or nothing in general landscape; but is a valuable foil amid the shrubs and smaller trees of the garden. Two other trees, of very different form from the cypress, and of larger growth, but sharing its solemnity, are grown in this country for ornament—the cedar of Lebanon and the deodar or Indian cedar. Ruskin's description of "flaked breadth" applies to both of them; the leafage taking the general form of flat, horizontal layers, which cut sharply across the main branches of the tree. A cedar, in a park or on a lawn, looks, as I have already suggested, as Highland cattle look in a field, not perhaps exactly out of place, but certainly as if it could hold its own, as it does, amid scenes of natural grandeur. We are all familiar with the biblical passages in which the cedars of Lebanon are used as symbols of majestic strength and stateliness.

Mr. Holman Hunt, in *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, writes

as follows of the cedars of Mount Lebanon as they are to-day. After describing the scene from a height of about 7,000 feet up the mountain, he says: "To the right lay a group of what looked like small mountain firs, these we were assured were the cedars; the snow reached close down to them. I shouted to my men to catch my horse, which had wandered in their direction, but he enjoyed his liberty, and on my taking up the chase, led me many devious tracks ere he was secured. A short ride then brought us under the trees, some twelve of them were indeed mightily trunked and limbed. I had lately read that a French savant had calculated, from examination of a transverse section of one of them, that its age was five thousand years. The rest of the trees are so much smaller in girth, that according to this calculation, they would be but a century or two old."

Evelyn has an interesting note on these trees. "Josephus tell us," he says, "that the cedar in Judea was first planted there by Solomon, who doubtless tried many rare experiments of this nature; and none more kingly than that of planting to posterity. I do not speak of those

which grow on the mountains of Libanus, in the colder and northern tracts of Syria: but, as I am informed by a curious traveller, there remaining now not above twenty-four of those stately trees in all those goodly forests, where that mighty prince set four score thousand hewers at work for the materials of one only temple and palace, 'tis a pregnant example what time and neglect will bring to ruin, if due and continual care be not taken to propagate timber." A comparison of Mr. Holman Hunt's narrative with that of the seventeenth-century traveller seems to show, when allowance is made for an interval of two hundred years, that both of them brought back accurate reports.

It is time to cry halt. It is not my purpose to enumerate all the trees that we see often or occasionally. One other, the false acacia, a seventeenth-century importation from North America, I will mention, if only because it is one that I see whenever I look up from writing. It is not much grown now in this country, having lost its reputation for useful timber. It is very different from the trees we have just been considering, being light and graceful,

with pinnate leafage that the uninitiate might almost mistake for that of the ash.

No, the false acacia cannot be our last tree. Yet another must be named. It ought to have been named earlier. But I will not go back and look for a better place for it: to take it up when it has just come to mind will mark the fact that this book does not pretend to be scientific. Our last tree, then, is the mountain ash or rowan. Probably if I had looked for an earlier place for it, I should at least have thought of being so unscientific as to place it with the yew, on account of the similarity of the old beliefs concerning them both.

One of the best-known appearances of the rowan in art, is the spray of it thrown across the coffin in Landseer's picture, "The Shepherd's Chief Mourner". The tree was supposed to be a charm against the evil eye and the ill-intent of witches and other malevolent beings. Evelyn says of it—and this is our last quotation of him whom we might well call worthy—"Ale and beer brewed with these berries, being ripe, is an incomparable drink, familiar in Wales, where this tree is reputed so sacred that there is not a churchyard without one of them planted

in it (as among us the yew); so, on a certain day in the year, everybody religiously wears a cross made of the wood; and the tree is by some authors called Fraxinus Cambro-Britannica, reputed to be a preservative against fascinations and evil spirits; whence, perhaps, we call it witchen, the boughs being stuck about the house or the wood used for walking staves". So we end our story of the trees in nature with one that links Christianity with the days of tree-worship.

The mountain ash, it should be said, only gets its name from the similarity of its leafage to that of the true ash. It is a graceful tree. In autumn its berries, so good for ale and beer, show from a considerable distance. I recollect wondering once—it was in Wales, near to an old Welsh stronghold—what a mass of bright red colour could be among the trees at the edge of a wood, and found on going nearer that it was a mountain ash with a plentiful crop of fruit.

Can we do better, reader, in quitting the woodland, than to drink a health to the trees in imaginary rowan-berry ale, and each of us to bring away an imaginary spray of the tree to ward off the evil eye and all other uncanny ills?

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH THE CHANGING YEAR

IN writing about nature during the different seasons of the year, winter seems to be the best season with which to begin. At any rate, the choice lies between winter and spring. Here I purpose to begin with winter. But every season has been prepared for by the preceding one, and is preparing for the one that is to follow. There is no beginning and no end, but a continuous cycle of change. We have to "run in," as children do with a skipping-rope that is being continually turned.

So I find myself, beginning to write about the trees in winter, obliged to make one reference to autumn. In winter most of our trees are stripped of their leaves. They are

> Bare ruin'd choirs where no bird sings.

We are accustomed to say that the trees have lost their leaves. Unable as we are not our-

selves to feel as if the trees had feeling, we pity them as we see their leaves drifting away before the autumn winds; and, when the last leaves are gone, we can almost think of them as shivering with cold, because their clothing has been taken from them. If they could know what we think, and could speak to us, they would tell us that we are quite wrong. They themselves make elaborate preparation for getting rid of their leaves before winter; and, ere wind or frost finally detaches the leaves, all vital relation between them and the tree has ceased. They would fall sooner or later did neither wind nor frost remove them. That these agencies would not affect them without help from the tree itself we can learn from the evergreens, the leaves of which survive the roughest wind and hardest winter, and fall, perhaps in spring or summer, when the tree has no further use for them. A garden with plenty of evergreens in it—my own is such an one—requires plenty also of clearing up, at other times than autumn, to get rid of holly, ivy, yew and other fallen leaves.

I have already confessed myself not to be a botanist; and what follows I take from an

article by Professor Weiss in the *National Home-Reading Union Magazine.* He tells us that while, after the sight of the brilliant colouring of autumn, the sight of falling leaves engenders melancholy, "for the trees it is a matter of prime importance, and a preparation for the battle against an inclement season". In naval phraseology the trees are only clearing the decks for action. "The loss of foliage," our article tells us, "is largely a protection against loss of water either in a season of drought or in a season of cold when the roots are unable to draw water out of a cold and often frozen soil. Our evergreen conifers have therefore leaves of small size and of dense and highly protected nature." It may be desirable to say here that it is through the leaves that the trees part with moisture. We read on: "In trees with deciduous foliage a change can be noted with the commencement of the autumn, when, with lessened activity of the roots, the ascent of sap becomes reduced. Then, at the base of the leaf stalk, a thin, but impervious cork layer is formed, which gradually reduces the amount of water supplied to the leaf; and this privation of nutriment

sets up certain changes in the leaf." The change of colour, from green to yellow or red, is the most noticeable of these changes. The change of colour in ripening apples, hips and haws is due to a like cause. There are other changes, which we cannot see, but which "include the passage back into the stem of many important food substances, so that when it is shed the leaf is partly emptied of its contents". Some of this material is used to form what is called an absciss layer or layer of separation, close to the cork layer mentioned above; and it is here that the final separation of the leaf from the tree, by tearing wind or disorganising frost, takes place. "Nor does the fall of the leaf leave an open wound; for the above-mentioned cork layer is already formed, and constitutes an impervious covering of the leaf scar."

Clearly, if we are to grieve for anything, it must be for the leaves, not for the tree. The tree, all the time, is taking good care of itself. It is dismissing its old servants, the leaves, not only without a pension, but after taking back food it has previously given them. It pushes them out on to the doorstep—we may

almost say—shuts the door, and leaves them to the scant mercy of the elements. How curiously wrong was the old idea that the tree-spirit, after the fall of the leaves, took refuge in the parasitic mistletoe or ivy, or in the neighbouring evergreen! The tree-spirit remains comfortably in the tree all the time, having rid itself of unnecessary food consumers before food has become scarce, and having already the young food consumers ready for the time when the work they can do for it will more than repay the cost of their keep. Here is another point, not mentioned in our first chapter, in which the trees resemble human beings—they take care of number one!

The reader may have noticed that the leaves cling longer to the dead than to the living branches of trees. In my orchard, two boughs of an apple-tree broke last summer under a too heavy burden of fruit. It is mid-winter now; we have had both wind and frost. Snow is over everything. Yet the leaves are still on these dead branches, though there are none left on any other branch of the tree. The reason is that when a branch is severed from

the tree, or merely hangs by a few fibres, the tree cannot carry on its elaborate work on the leaf-stems on that branch. It has, in fact, no need to do so; for leaves on a dead branch can make no demands on the tree. Hence the leaves, left to themselves, and not actually turned adrift, hold to the dead branch longer than they could to the living one.

The sight of the leafless trees in winter, then, need not move us to pity. This feeling, if we are to admit it at all, must be reserved for the fallen leaves, swept roughly together, and piled into a heap, to become the useful, fertilising leaf-mould, by the aid of which other leaves, and flowers, and fruit, will be grown. For the trees themselves winter does not mean death, or disease, or privation, but only a pause. Their branches may no longer be leafy choirs for the song-birds, but though bare, they are not ruined. Already next year's leaves and flowers are there in bud, ready, one might almost say eager, to open out, as soon as in the growing warmth of earth and air the sap will rise, bringing food to promote their growth.

There is nothing to suggest melancholy in

the condition of the trees in winter; quite the reverse; they are already a symbol of hope. Long before the spring, before the turn of the year, indeed, one can go round the orchard, and see what promise of a crop next autumn there is on some of the fruit-trees. December is not yet out, and, already, I know that, next year, if the bloom escapes frost and hail, and no insect-pest works mischief, I shall have plenty of Ribston pippins. The melancholy only comes when a tree begins to lose its leaves in autumn earlier than its fellows, when more and more branches bear few or no leaves; when, in winter, there are branches from which the small twigs have been torn away and no fresh ones come; and when the winter-buds become fewer and fewer. It is then, not because autumn has passed to winter, but because many winters have come and gone since the seed became a seedling, and because the tree is passing through old age to death, that we who must die may be touched by the coming of death even upon the unknowing tree.

Nor does winter wholly rob garden, hedge-row and woodland of beauty. Life is there, though almost passive for the time, and beauty

is there as well. Winter, indeed, has a peculiar beauty of its own.

Those who live in the country, and who are not addicted to the various kinds of slaughter that pass under the name of sport, are often asked by their town-friends if they do not find it dull in winter. The answer is, of course, that the country is never dull to the naturalist, the botanist, the gardener or the lover of beauty. Each season has its interest and its charm. My little girl, set at school to write a composition on "My Favourite Season," came home and declared she could not do it; she had no favourite season; she liked them all in their various ways; so with a preamble to this effect, she wrote about autumn, the current season, and said why she liked it; and one reason for her liking were the clusters of coral berries on the barberry; and I, too, often go, when the sky is blue, and revel in the rich harmony of red and blue, of berries and sky, and the green and gold of evergreen and withered oak-leaves—a harmony still played at times when autumn is over and winter has come.

A week or two ago I saw a picture which

I shall not have the chance of forgetting, for it is to be seen at not very long intervals, from a window facing west. Close at hand were rich green yew and holly and fir, and a climbing rose on the house-wall that had not lost its leaves. Beyond were the giant limbs of a great horse-chestnut, with just a few leaves, dead gold in colour, left clinging to the branches. Beyond again was an oak, of a duller golden hue; with a dense background of bare elm, and ash and beech. There was a slight haze, and the sun was setting behind the trees: a huge, red, glowing ball. This afternoon, the air being clear, the sun and the western sky were golden. The picture from the window was still beautiful, but not so beautiful as before; the colour-scheme was not complete.

Trees seldom look more beautiful than when, after rain, the westering sun shines on them from under the cloud. One such scene remains all the more clearly in my memory because I made a rough colour-note of it at the time. I often pass the place under ordinary conditions and think how that one day I saw it transfigured. It was but a large field, with a tree here and there, other trees in the hedgerows beyond,

and a long line of trees on higher ground in the distance. The eastern sky above varied from grey to blue-black, and against it the trees positively glowed with colour that ran through many shades of gold and russet red, with intervals of grey. A man was ploughing in the field, with a brown and a white horse, and the field itself was part bright green, part rich red brown. Over all rose the vast arch of a brilliant rainbow.

The woodland in winter takes on wonderfully rich colour when, in the morning or the evening, there is a glow in the sky. There is no such rich colour in the height of summer. And even in "the light of common day," how solemnly brown and purple a belt of trees will look, and what a picture we get if, in the foreground, there is, say, a potato-field, with men working in it, and baskets here and there, and perhaps a horseless cart, and, behind the trees, distant hills. No matter if the sky be grey, it is echoed by the greys in the landscape below.

Perhaps the trees look their worst in winter when there is nothing but green grass before and around them, and a grey sky above. Then they look black, the green of the grass

looks crude, the sky looks cold. Recently, as I walked along a country-road, there was such a scene on either hand. But, presently I came to some tall trees by the roadside, beech and elm, only the lower part of their grey stems hidden by a grey oak paling. The wet road was grey. Farther on a newly-ploughed field was a rich brown. The grass of a more distant field looked grey, and the trees beyond took up the note. Then two haystacks came into view and added a pleasant dun-coloured note; then came a cheery-looking, thatched, black-and-white farmhouse. The line of grass in the near hedgerow looked bright not harsh in hue. The whole was enclosed between the grey road beneath and the grey sky above. Nature was playing quiet colour-music and feeling was quick to enjoy it. Such pleasures as these are the irreducible minimum of what the winter has for us. Nay, one should not speak of minimum. The beauty is different from, rather than less fine in quality than, what is given at any other season.

The reader may well ask to be spared any more attempts to describe in words the beauty of nature. They are inadequate at the best,

and mine make no pretence to be of the best. What I have written cannot call up to the reader such vivid recollections as those that have led me to make a record of them in words. But the words will serve their purpose if, though little more than an enumeration of the elements that make up many a beautiful, yet not uncommon scene, they set upon the watch for such scenes some among the readers of these pages who have not hitherto looked for them. Travelling once with a clergyman who said that he got but little enjoyment from landscape painting, I asked him if the changing colour and light of the landscape through which we were passing gave him no pleasure; if contrast of brown earth, red tiles, green trees, white cloud, blue sky, and so forth, never sent through him a thrill of emotion. He said that they moved him not at all. Should the reader be in like case he is missing possible enjoyment that nature is always offering freely to his sight. This must be my excuse for trying to describe in words some of the scenes that have given me pleasure.

When winter is most wintery, when there is snow or hoar-frost, then there is beauty

which that of any other time of the year at least cannot exceed.

In the town the beauty of the snow is short-lived; almost as soon as it has fallen it becomes dirty, and we are glad for other reasons than those of mere physical comfort when it is gone. It is not so in the country. There the snow comes too seldom, and is too quickly gone. We are ready to bear discomfort for the sake of the beauty. Trampled and wheel-marked it turns grey only, not black. The trees look as if they were covered with white leafage, warmer or colder in hue with the varying light and colour in the sky, and we know not whether in sunlight or in moonlight they look the more beautiful.

More beautiful even than the snow is the hoar-frost, when the brown earth and the russet-hued grasses and the leaves of the evergreens are softly greyed, and the branches and smallest twigs of the trees are all picked out in silver that shines through the sunlit haze, which, growing thinner overhead, lets in the full blue of the sky to enrich the colour-harmony. So beautiful is the scene that we almost sigh over its evanescence, and then

are glad that it is not always with us, lest its loveliness should grow stale and cease to charm.

Here I may interpolate the remark that a living landscape painter, Mr. George Clausen, has often rendered this effect with rare subtlety. For one picture of his, representing men working in a kitchen-garden, or allotment patches, on a frosty morning—the ground just turned over by the spade being rich brown, and the rest greyed by the frost, which also shines on tree and haystack—I have a particular affection, because one of my greatest pleasures, not often enough enjoyed to lose its freshness, is to see a similar effect in a nursery-garden immediately behind my house. And how finely two Scots pines in the distance take their place in such a scene! With such infrequency does the hoar-frost come; so speedily does it disappear; that, as he has told me, and as I have seen, Mr. Clausen has had to lay aside unfinished canvases for a whole year, until a return of the transient effect has enabled him to complete them.

Winter, then, is no time of discontent to the observant lover of beauty. He has not ceased

SPRING-TIME

to enjoy its peculiar charm—and we have limited ourselves here to scenes in which trees play a chief part, and said nothing about much else that is beautiful in the time of pause—before there comes all the quick excitement of the spring-time. For a time we almost forget the trees; we are too eagerly watching for the snowdrop, the crocus, the violet and the daffodil, and enjoying their beauty as they come. But, in due time, the trees assert their claim to our attention. Little brown buds become points of green. "Rosy plumelets tuft the larch." We are surprised, unless we have been watching, to find the hazel catkins full of pollen even in February; and, looking closely, we see the little crimson, female flowers. Soon we see a spot of white amid the tender green of the opening plum-blossom, and pink begins to show amid the green of the pear-bloom. The apple will soon follow. Too early they open, all of them, many a spring-time; they are caught by the late frosts; and hopes that had been formed before winter was far advanced are seen to be doomed to disappointment.

The mention of the bloom of our fruit-trees suggests a somewhat fuller reference than has

yet been made to the flowers of our trees. Those of our larger trees are with very few exceptions too small to have any appreciable effect on the appearance of the tree. The most considerable exception, as we have already seen, is the horse-chestnut, whose large pyramidal groups of flowers inevitably attract attention. For anything like the same effectiveness we have to go to the trees of smaller growth; and here we get even greater effectiveness, the flowers, in some cases, either preceding the leaves, or overwhelming them by their profusion and brilliancy.

The most familiar examples, apart from the fruit-trees, are the hawthorn and the laburnum, both of which, like the horse-chestnut, flower in May, when spring is passing into early summer. The masses of sweet-scented, white or pink flowers on the hawthorns are then one of the chief joys of the countryside. Where there are numbers of white hawthorns together, as, in my own neighbourhood, at Capesthorne, they look as if delicately grey-white snow had fallen upon them alone.

The laburnum is a garden-tree, and its long hanging racemes of brilliant yellow flowers

quite overpower the green foliage. Tennyson's description, "Laburnum, dropping-wells of fire," is well known. Mr. Step declares his preference for Cowper's "rich in streaming gold," as embodying a more exact colour-idea. But the yellow of the flower is quite different from that of the metal; and whilst the latter may shine, the former glows. Tennyson, it will be recollected, also speaks of "the ground-flame of the crocus". There is much colour in nature, especially when the sun illumines it, that comes very near to the appearance of incandescence. The word is a cumbrous one, but recent useful appliances have made it convey a clear idea to us. Glow and glowing convey the same idea, but with less sense of brilliance. Fire and flame are at once felt to be not so appropriate. But flowers, and even autumn foliage, often cannot be adequately described in terms of colour alone.

The brilliance of the laburnum flowers has led us into what is perhaps not wholly a digression. Less familiar than the hawthorn is the blackthorn, which blossoms earlier: when the daffodils "take the winds of March with beauty". The flowers of wild cherry,

apple, pear and plum-trees are also conspicuous. In the cultivated varieties of these trees —which all belong to the rose family, and this suggests again the beauty of the wild roses— where the production of large quantities of fruit is the aim of the gardener, the flowers are inevitably to be seen in great profusion; and the orchard, in the flowering-time, becomes as much a fairyland of beauty as the garden or woodland when covered with hoar-frost, and like the winter fairyland, that of the spring-time needs blue sky and bright sunshine to show it at its best. Whole tracts of country, under these conditions, become exquisitely beautiful. There are rich harmonies of colour of which the mere transcript would suffice to make a picture.

Among the larger trees, when the new leafage is coming to maturity, it is not always so. In the very early spring, when the opening leaf-buds give a mere flush of warm colour to the deciduous trees in the woods, there is perfect harmony between them and the dark tones of the evergreens. But, later, when some trees are a vivid green, and others are still bare, we have the crude elements of an unfinished picture.

There are people who raise no objection to nature being modified to serve useful ends, but think it nothing short of lese-majesty to say that nature may need to be modified in order to become beautiful. Perdita, we remember, would have nothing to do with flowers that had been modified by art. I have already pointed out how much of the beauty of the country is due to man's work in it. And it has to be said that nature does not at every turn provide us with works of art in the pictorial sense. That is our business, not nature's, who only furnishes us with materials and suggestions. One would like to hear the pictorial merits of spring discussed by a company of landscape painters. But their works are more instructive than their words could be; and, unless I am in error, there are far more pictures painted of either summer, autumn or winter than of spring. Certainly, every year, when spring is well advanced, I find myself quite impatiently wanting the oak and the ash to get into leaf. It is here and there that spring is beautiful: in the details, not as a whole.

So Richard Jefferies, prose-poet and naturalist, says, in the course of an eloquent passage

on the spring-time: "Nature has no arrangement, no plan, nothing judicious even; the walnut-trees bring forth their tender buds, and the frost burns them—they have no mosaic of time to fit in, like a Roman tessellated pavement; nature is like a child, who will sing and shout though you may be never so deeply pondering in the study, and does not wait for the hour that suits your mind. You do not know what you may find each day; perhaps you may only pick a fallen feather, but it is beautiful, every filament. Always beautiful! everything beautiful!" Yes, we agree, everything, each thing beautiful; but not always, the whole scene, even nearly beautiful, as we look at it. One might say that, in the spring, nature's colour-orchestra is preparing to play. Some of the performers have taken their places and are tuning their instruments, others are just seating themselves; others again, have not yet come in.

The willows are among the first trees to get into leaf. The horse-chestnut is a rather later comer. "If you are under its shadow," says Hamerton, "you walk in a soft green light that comes through the broad-spreading leaflets.

No transparencies are finer than this sun-illumined canopy of green, and whilst the leaves are quite young and perfect, they are cut out so clearly as to have a grandly decorative effect." Often have I proved the truth of this appreciation. Later, when the leaves are fully grown, few trees afford a better protection from rain; which has to be heavy and long continued before more than a few stray drops can find their way to the ground. Our admiration for the tree is increased if we stand under it in a heavy shower, as well protected as if a solid roof were over our head. The birch and the beech are fairly early comers. How fresh and sweet is the green of the young beech-leaves! The oak and the ash, and, among the smaller trees, the false acacia are among the latest comers. The young oak-leaves are almost russet; most other leaves open out a quiet green. When all the trees are in leaf the orchestra is complete, summer has fully arrived. Nature's great leaf-symphony is being played.

When this time has come, it is interesting to look back and make comparisons with winter. The change has been so gradual that we do not always realise how great it has been. The

trees now close us in as they did not in winter. Many a distant view has been wholly shut out. We look for some familiar landmark and are perplexed for a time because we cannot see it. In the woods, the gaps between the evergreen trees have been filled in. It is as if broken ranks had been completed by the bringing up of reserve battalions. The garden in which there was no shelter from wind and rain, and into which we felt as if any passer-by could look, is now withdrawn from the world of man; and the blazing sun—as intolerable at times as the winter's cold—and the heaviest rain, can both be defied. The tree-lined roads are arched over from side to side by a shady canopy. We know it, we feel it, without looking up. Of the bare rafters which in winter were all that was left of this canopy we were hardly conscious.

It is difficult for us, in summer, not to think of the trees as rejoicing. The wind rustling through the leaves is like a happy song. All the elaborate preparations they made many months ago have now received well-nigh their full accomplishment. The flowers have come and gone. In wonderfully varied ways they

have been fertilised; and, where was the flower, the fruit now is growing. Summer is the time of maturity. The trees have married, and now they are bearing children. And how prolific they are! What more than adequate provision they seem to make for the propagation of their species! Could every acorn become a tree, the world would be one vast oak-forest. Tennyson was troubled in mind because nature brings so few out of the unnumbered seeds to bear. Here we will not concern ourselves with the great problems that confront humanity; we will only permit ourselves to wonder at the prolific fruitfulness which makes it seem impossible for any species to be killed off in the fierce struggle for existence.

The struggle, of course, is not between individuals of different species only. Oak-seedling contends with oak-seedling, ash with ash, and so with them all. How familiar is the story of two brothers, each planting a tree, and then going out into the world to seek his fortune. Both trees flourish for a time; then one decays. As with the trees, so it is said to have been with the fortunes of the brothers who planted them. Here we have a survival of the belief

in imitative magic. We must look elsewhere for the reason why one of two trees, planted side by side, will decay while the other flourishes. It will be well to notice whether or not the flourishing tree is planted to the south of the other, and robs it of sunlight, and is itself protected by its less fortunate neighbour from the fiercest of the wintry blasts. I know that such are the relative positions of two trees, at least, of which the above story is told; and close to my own house are two ash-trees, evidently of almost the same age; one is living and doing well; the other is dead. The latter is to the north of the former.

Competition is hard and relentless in the woodland. We have seen how the beech will oust the oak. It is in summer that some of the effects of this competition are most obvious. We are glad to escape at times to the woods. There we are away from the sights and sounds of human strife. It is not, however, to nature that we must go to learn how to live so that, if such a thing be possible, none shall suffer by another's gain. Human life, like human art, must rise above nature. If any one will have this to be lese-majesty, then let such an

one eschew the apples of cultivation and eat crab-apples only!

The means by which the struggle for existence is carried on are not obvious unless we closely examine the trees. They do not count for much in the general effect; and a full account of them does not come within the scope of this book. We have been led into partial discussion of the struggle by the remark that in summer the trees—the successful ones, that is—seem as if they must rejoice, now that their yearly labour, of which the great end is reproduction, is so nearly accomplished. And when they are in full leaf, they look so full of life, so wealthy, so well-clad, they have such a sumptuous appearance, that something of the spirit of their well-being is communicated to us, and we feel the richer for their riches.

Let me dwell for a moment on something that has been incidentally referred to again and again. It is for their leafage that we chiefly love the trees. For their strength and their grace of lighter limb we have admiration. Of the flower and fruit of the larger trees we take little account. We commonly distinguish trees from flowers, meaning merely that the most

conspicuous flowers do not grow on conspicuously large trees. Also we speak of fruit-trees, as though all trees did not bear fruit. What we call fruit-trees are, of course, those that bear fruit which we use for food. So we often speak of the larger trees as timber, again thinking of the use we make of them, and not of the ends they have in and for themselves. It is not to deprecate our regarding things largely from the point of view of their usefulness to ourselves that I draw attention to these commonplace facts.

Indeed, I have at once to mention a characteristic of the trees, as distinct from other parts of nature's pageant, that is useful to us. More than anything else we value them as a shade, a shelter. They and the rock-caves were all the shelter our remote ancestors possessed. Instinctively animal and bird still seek a refuge from danger in the wood or shrubbery. And it is in summer that we most need the shade of the trees and that they are able to afford it. Not that we can think of this as being planned for our convenience. For the woodland would be a better screen against the winds if it retained

its leaves in the winter. Though, even here, what we gained in shelter we should lose in light, and we can always arrange screens of evergreen trees. Even in winter, house or farmstead looks, and is, much more comfortable for the trees about it. How often, near the coast, we see a plantation screening the farm from the cold sea-winds. From time immemorial the living tree has been chiefly useful as a shade; and, in saying this, I do not overlook such larger, and more communal value, as the influence of trees upon climate and rainfall; and such exceptional use as the protection of mountain-villages against the destructive avalanche. The leafiness of trees, then, is one of their qualities that we value most. The spreading tree is more to us than the lofty pyramidal tree. The Lombardy poplar and the lofty firs are welcome here and there; but oak, beech, elm and the rest of the widely branching trees are better for general use, as a house is more comfortable than a tower.

As a part of the pageant of nature, of the beautiful visible world, how delightfully the trees add to the interest of the landscape by

giving us only glimpses of it here and there! A treeless landscape is like a straight road. It has no surprises, no mystery. I have already noticed the great difference that is made in a wooded landscape by the absence of the leaves in winter. Tennyson, as we have seen, makes the surroundings of Mariana more dreary by saying that only one poplar marks "the level waste, the rounding gray"; and Hamerton notes that, without exception, the poets of all ages associate trees with agreeable scenery.

To all the varied beauty and interest of summer, with its wealth of life in animal, bird, insect and flower—such a wealth as Richard Jefferies follows into minute detail with such sustained delight and delightfulness—the trees serve as a background. They are the scenery amid which nature's great play is performed. Their size, and their breadth of sober colour, contrast admirably with the slightness and varied splendour of the plants and shrubs we value chiefly for their flowers. Neither field nor garden is at its best without a setting of trees.

We have made a somewhat long halt in our

journey through the changing year. It is now time for us to go forward again. There comes a period in summer when the greenness borders on monotony. We are thankful when the hay has been cut in the fields, for then we get a colour-contrast. Not that the leafage ever strikes one note only. There are always differences. But, in full summer, even the variations from the greyish green of the willow to the deeper shades of fir and yew, are not sufficient, amid grass and corn that are still quite green, to produce the harmony that can only come through variations of considerable range. This period does not, however, last long; only long enough indeed to make us just a little eager for the rich beauty of early autumn. Then the corn, either standing, or cut and bound into sheaves, gives abundant contrast, and the richer greens of the time, still, however, wholly green, are the better seen by the help of it. Exquisite variety is given by the lighter gold of such crops as oats or barley, and the deeper gold of wheat; and the whole is enriched by aid of the poppy and convolvulus growing—not economically perhaps—amid the corn.

In Constable's picture "The Cornfield," the field itself is far from being the most conspicuous part of the landscape. The trees, the lane and the hedges in the foreground occupy much greater space; and they, and the boy and animals in the lane, count for much more in the subject-interest of the picture. Beyond the cornfield, which is a mere strip near the centre of the picture, are low-lying meadows, a church-tower among trees, and distant country. "In the Lane" would have been a better title than "The Cornfield," were it not that the colour-note given by the corn is of the greatest value in the picture; which I may add, well illustrates also what has already been said about the surprise-views we get between the trees in a well-wooded landscape.

Mention of the cornfields suggests reference to an animistic belief similar to those spoken of in an earlier chapter. We have seen that it was believed that, when the trees were denuded of leaves in the winter, the tree-spirit took refuge in the mistletoe or neighbouring evergreen. As the corn is being reaped, hares, rabbits and game-birds are regularly driven towards the centre of the field, and the reapers

are ready with sticks and even guns to kill them when at last, the uncut corn having become a mere patch, they try to make their escape. The old belief was that the spirit of the corn entered into and escaped in the last of the living creatures to leave the corn.

When the harvest has been gathered in, the stubble-field still serves as a contrast to the green of the trees, which, however, is now nearing its time of change. The trees have got out of this year's leaves all that they need from them, and are preparing for their dismissal. Their change of colour, from green to yellow and red, is the sign that the end is near. The beauty of the autumn foliage, whether of single trees, or over a wide stretch of wooded country, has often been extolled. In places the colour is exquisitely varied, in tenderest shades; elsewhere it is so brilliant, that, in the sunlight, it is, as with the laburnum, of glowing fire rather than of mere colour that we think. No more than in spring is there always complete harmony. Often, in a single tree, there will be but a patch of yellow, the rest remaining a vivid green. In late autumn some trees, such as the sycamore and the

horse-chestnut, are bare, while others, such as the oak, are in full leaf. But an occasional discord does not make the colour of the autumn foliage other than very beautiful.

"All things brown, and yellow, and red," says Richard Jefferies, "are brought out by the autumn sun; the brown furrows freshly turned where the stubble was yesterday, the brown bark of trees, the brown fallen leaves, the brown stalks of plants; the red haws, the red unripe blackberries, red bryony-berries, reddish-yellow fungi; yellow hawk-weed, yellow ragwort, yellow hazel-leaves, elms, spots in lime or beech; not a speck of yellow, red, or brown the yellow sunlight does not find out." The leaves have plenty of companionship in their change of colour; what was the green world of summer now runs through the whole gamut of the warmest hues. But slowly, yet surely, the fire, if we may so put it, dies down. We need fear no discords, for the last green, that of the willow, perhaps, has turned to yellow. Here and there we shall find a patch of brilliant red, as in the scarlet oak, but, for the most part, all has become dun yellow and brown, and soon, with the exception of perhaps

only the oak, and a few leaves still clinging to a branch here and there, the trees will have assumed the aspect they will bear, save for snow and frost, until the sap begins to move upwards again in the spring-time. So we come again to the point at which we "ran in" to the cycle of the year.

One or two things remain to be said. We ought to pay a tribute to the beauty and pathos of the falling and fallen leaves. We have seen that the trees from which they fall do not need our pity. But the delicately framed and beautifully shaped and coloured leaves, that have served the trees so well, and not the trees alone, and that now are cast adrift and fall to the ground, and when they have fallen, are still so beautiful for a time, spreading a carpet that is pleasant both to see and to walk upon, these no stern reflection that they are unconscious both of their glory and their fate can prevent us from pitying, in that, trodden or untrodden, gathered into heaps to be burned or slowly turned to mould, their individual loveliness, their very existence, is close upon its end.

Before we "run out" of the unending cycle,

another word or two may be said about winter. We must not forget the brilliant hues of the holly-berries and the barberry, and the hips and haws, that force out the colour of the evergreen leaves, and the leaves of lighter hue, those of the rose-bushes for example, that stay, and stay green, well through the winter.

I turn my head and look out — it is winter now and snow is falling—and the contrast between the evergreens and the bare, deciduous trees awakens a sense of incompleteness, and carries the thoughts to the summertime when all the trees will be fully clothed in the leaves that, as we have seen, do most endear to us the trees themselves. For then we sit amid the dappled light and shade beneath them, or shelter there from the shower, and be it or be it not irrational, we cannot withhold a feeling of gratefulness.

CHAPTER V

THE ARCHITECTURE OF TREES

"A CHILD'S division of plants," says Ruskin in *Modern Painters*, "is into 'trees and flowers'. If, however, we were to take him in spring, after he had gathered his lapful of daisies, from the lawn into the orchard, and ask him how he would call those wreaths of richer floret, whose frail petals tossed their foam of promise between him and the sky, he would at once see the need of some intermediate name, and call them, perhaps, 'tree-flowers'. If, then, we took him to a birch-wood, and showed him that catkins were flowers, as well as cherry-blossoms, he might, with a little help, reach so far as to divide all flowers into two classes; one, those that grew on ground; and another, those that grew on trees. The botanist might smile at such a division; but an artist would not. To him, as to the child, there is something specific and distinctive in those

rough trunks that carry the higher flowers. To him, it makes the main difference between one plant and another, whether it is to tell as a light upon the ground, or as a shade upon the sky."

In the preceding chapter we have already noted this distinction. The first kind of plants Ruskin calls tented plants. "They live in encampments, on the ground," he says, "as lilies; or on surfaces of rock, or stems of other plants, as lichens and mosses." One wonders if the child would ever call them tented plants. The epithet does not strike one adult, at least, as being particularly appropriate. These plants grow in companies, but they are not tented. And do not the other plants, those that we call trees, live also in encampments or companies? The child would be more likely to call the plants that grow on ground, or rock or tree-stem, "carpet plants," thinking of them as they affect himself.

And, if he knew anything about tents, he would be likely to compare the tall-growing plants to them. Ruskin calls them building plants. "These will *not* live on the ground," he says, "but eagerly raise edifices above it.

Each works hard with solemn forethought all its life." The reader may think all this somewhat fanciful. Ruskin does not insist on his nomenclature. He says we are welcome to give the plants what names we please, and to render what account of them we think fittest. "But," he says, "to us, as artists, or lovers of art, this is the first and most vital question concerning a plant: 'Has it a fixed form or a changing one? Shall I find it always as I do to-day—this Parnassia palustris—with one leaf and one flower? or may it some day have incalculable pomp of leaves and unmeasured treasure of flowers? Will it rise only to the height of a man—as an ear of corn—and perish like a man; or will it spread its boughs to the sea and branches to the river, and enlarge its circle of shade in heaven for a thousand years?'" This last kind of plant, the tree, is the one we are considering in this book; and we have now briefly to note its building or architectural character.

The next chapter of this book is entitled "Trees in Architecture," and there we shall find, amongst other things, that there is considerable resemblance, sometimes greater, some-

times less, between the forest, man's early, natural shelter, and the artificial shelters he has built for himself. The forest has often an architectural appearance; so has an avenue of limes, or elms, or beeches. It is only an appearance, however. In a building, columns, walls, roof, are all united to form a whole. In forest or avenue each tree is a separate whole, detached from the others. Trees grow differently, spreading out on every side, when they are widely separate from each other, and not limited by neighbourly claims to light and air; but even when they are crowded together each stands separately, if not alone. No tree asks for another's help, as one column needs the help of another to carry a lintel or an arch. One tree may shield another in a storm; but that is not active aid; it is only passive aid, due to accident of position. If, then, we are to find architecture in trees, we must look for it in the single tree; and we shall not look in vain.

The Roman architect and writer, Vitruvius, said that a good building should have three qualities, *stabilitas*, *utilitas*, *venustas*—stability, utility, beauty. Do trees possess these qualities? Clearly they have stability, not always adequate

for all emergencies, it is true; but no more than this can be said of buildings. They have also beauty; which is a constant source of delight to us. What about utility?

Here we must walk warily. It can be said at once, of course, and will immediately have come to the reader's mind, that trees are useful for their timber. But in this sense they are only useful when they have ceased to be trees. They are useful for shade; to this limited extent they serve the purpose of buildings; and how much this service they render us counts for in the pleasure with which we look at them or at any pictorial representation of them we have already seen. Their fruits and other parts of them are variously useful to us; and it is mainly or even wholly for this reason that many trees are grown. We train them, and even partly change their nature, grafting one tree on another, in order to increase their usefulness. And if it will serve our purpose to do so, we even cut short their life. Ah! Here is another quality; one that Vitruvius does not mention with regard to buildings—*Life*. We have already spoken about it; but we must not forget it in relation to tree-architecture. In

fact, it necessitates our considering whether or not utility should not be struck out of our brief list of tree-qualities.

That which has life has the right to be considered as an end in itself, for itself and for its species. Its usefulness to another creature is a secondary matter. We should go too far if we called it accidental; for no creature liveth unto itself. Man, as we have seen, has made many changes in the life of plants in order to develop the special qualities in which they are useful to him. Still, the usefulness is secondary. The tree exists for itself and its progeny. So we will give it the due of not considering its secondary uses in discussing its architecture. This leaves us stability and beauty. And these, we must not forget, the tree having life, are vital. First let us consider the tree's stability.

Has the reader ever watched the planting of a young tree, and seen how, when a hole has been dug for it, and the soil levelled, and the tree put down, the roots are carefully drawn out in the direction in which they have started out to leave the stem? These roots, as the tree grows, will grow also, and be the means

both of its sustenance and its stability. Growth for growth, roots, stem and branches will keep pace together.

The roots are the tree's foundations; and it is not, as with a building, only a dead-weight that they have to support; they have to hold the tree against lateral pressure, against the force of the wind. Thus they are in part buttress as well as foundation. Where the bole of the tree divides into the roots the tree spreads out, and we see something of the foundation-strength. I well recollect when, as a boy at school, I took up to the drawing-master a sketch of a tree in which this swelling towards the roots was not shown; and it was pointed out to me that I had omitted one of the most important things in the tree's structure. I have never omitted it since that day. The broadening of the silhouette of the tree towards the ground suggests a further spreading underground and gives a sense of security. Whether we consciously think of it or not, it gives us pleasure.

Above the roots and the spreading bole comes the stem, or come several stems, and then —speaking of the majority of trees—comes that

wonderful vital architecture, the dividing out into always more and more slender branches, twigs and shoots. And it is all vital. The increase is no merely mechanical addition from the outside, but is the addition, by the tree's own living power, of living cells innumerable, formed, how we do not know—life is ever a mystery—from the inorganic nourishment drawn from earth and air. And always the balance is preserved, the right proportion of strength and weight in all the parts to ensure stability. No, not always; only as a rule. Often a branch becomes too heavily weighted for its strength, and breaks. Two great limbs of a large horse-chestnut-tree in my garden have had to be bound together with clamps and tie-rod, without which the tree would have fallen asunder. Fruit-trees often bear too heavily for the strength of some of their branches. The dryads are no more infallible builders than their human brethren of the craft. Still, they *are* skilful builders; stability is maintained for the most part.

Here, while we are considering the stability of the trees, can be said most appropriately something about the effect of wind upon them.

BEECH TREE IN SHERWOOD FOREST

A few days ago, while I sat writing, there was not a breath of wind, and whenever I looked up at the trees it was to see them absolutely motionless. There is always something well-nigh unnatural in this perfect stillness. It is as if the trees were silently expecting some momentous event. It is only rarely that there is not some slight movement. As I write now, the November wind roars in the chimney, there is a rushing noise among the trees, rising and falling like the sound of breaking waves, and I look up to see them swaying to and fro. We are accustomed to the movement; we are almost ready to interpret it as a sign of life, as active; whereas, of course, it is only passive, involuntary. Wordsworth likened the daffodils, bending to and fro in the wind, to a company of dancers; but this was a poet's licence.

Movement is always interesting. The clouds speeding or leisurely moving across the sky; their shadows passing over the hills; the ceaseless motion of the sea, now like rippling laughter, now like firmly set purpose, now like turbulent wrath; all these are endlessly interesting to watch, as we have already noted. So is the

movement of trees in the wind. And as one watches, one notes how they differ in movement. Young trees, of course, seem to have a much rougher time of it than older ones; their whole frame is bent hither and thither. They remind us of the little sailing-boats whose mast-heads stoop so near to the sea that we wonder if they will ever right themselves again. Trees of older growth are not to be thus disturbed. They will let their smaller branches yield to the wind; they may even bend a little in their main stems; but this is all. They are like great sailing-ships that stand up against the breeze; some of them may be even likened to the modern ocean liners, upon which the wind has little or no effect. But one and all move. Richard Jefferies waxes almost angry with the church-towers and spires that he sees through the trees, partly because of their want of proportion, partly because of their stiff immobility. There is no such stiffness about even the stoutest tree.

Sturdiest of resisters of the wind is the oak, which only seems to yield sufficiently to show how little it will yield. We might almost think it contemptuously resentful of the effort of the

wind to disturb its dignified calm. Its tortuous branches will not bend. Only straight young branches yield with the slightest appearance of willingness; and that the highest and outermost, and therefore most slender branches, cannot resist, only evidences by contrast the tree's essential immobility. The stalwart chestnut yields more and more gracefully. The sycamore yields with long, slow, swaying movements. The ash is quicker. The motions of the beech often lack rhythm. The strong but lofty elm and lime let their branches sway up and down. The Lombardy poplar gracefully bows its head, and lets the wind play with its plumes. The smaller trees lean bodily before the gale. All this variety of resistance and of movement, and more, do we see, as we watch the trees on a windy day. I have already in a previous chapter had to say something about the movement of the leaves of different trees, which perhaps is hardly to be considered as connected with their architecture, in the sense in which we are using the term.

Some of the effects upon trees of winds blowing prevalently from one quarter are readily seen. Often the whole tree is thrown

quite conspicuously out of the perpendicular. This is most noticeable in level, open country near the sea, where the trees resemble thin, shrivelled, hump-backed dwarfs. In woods near the sea the sky-line curves upwards from the coast-side; the trees that are sheltered by their neighbours from the harsh sea-winds making the better growth. Far inland, in exposed situations, such trees as the larger willows and our native poplars often lean far out of the perpendicular; and, under the same conditions, more stoutly-limbed trees, like the elm and the lime, lean distinctly, if not so markedly. In other cases the effect of the prevailing wind is to make the tree less symmetrical than it would be otherwise; and this, not unseldom, increases its beauty. The Lombardy poplar, having no great weight of branches, and thinning away towards the top, easily maintains its erectness.

Keen observers will note the varying sound of the wind as it passes through different trees; variety in thickness of stem and branch, and in character of leafage, is as the variety in instruments of music. Thus Mr. Thomas Hardy says that "to dwellers in a wood, almost every species of tree has its voice as well as

its feature. At the passing of the breeze, the fir-trees sob and moan no less distinctly than they rock; the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash hisses amid its quiverings; the beech rustles while its flat boughs rise and fall. And winter, which modifies the note of such trees as shed their leaves, does not destroy its individuality."

So far the tree's stability. The other architectural quality we were to note was its beauty. Trees have a beauty that is architectural, and a beauty that we may compare to decoration. In the latter category we should place the beauty of leafage, in form and colour, the beauty of flowers, the beauty of colour on stem and branches. We have already had much to say about all these.

The architectural beauty arises out of the conditions that make for stability; out of the gradual change from the spreading roots and sturdy bole to the almost thread-like thinness of the outermost and highest twigs. A not uncommon mistake of not always youthful artists is to make stem and branch taper. But this is not the tree's method of building. An average even thickness is maintained until a

point of subdivision is reached. Thus the girth is decreased not gradually but by stages. The final contrast between the stalwart, simple strength of the lower and central part of the tree, and the complex lightness of the higher and outward parts of it, is one main feature of the tree's beauty.

Ruskin well describes the increase of lightness through subdivision, by reference to an example of the tree-drawing of J. D. Harding. "Take the trunk of the largest stone pine, plate 25 in *The Park and the Forest.* For the first nine or ten feet from the ground it does not loose one hair's-breadth of its diameter. But the shoot broken off just under the crossing part of the distant tree is followed by an instant diminution of the trunk, perfectly appreciable both by the eye and the compasses. Again, the stem maintains undiminished thickness up to the two shoots on the left, from the loss of which it suffers again perceptibly. On the right, immediately above, is the stump of a very large bough, whose loss reduces the stem suddenly to about two-thirds of what it was at the root. Diminished again, less considerably, by the minor branch close to the stump, it now

retains its diameter up to the three branches broken off just under the head, where it once more loses in diameter; and finally branches into the multitude of head-boughs of which not one will be found tapering in any part, but losing itself gradually by division among its off-shoots and spray. This is nature, and beauty too."

Another feature of the beauty of the tree is the near approach to uprightness of the highest branches, and the gradual change to more horizontal direction lower down the tree, until the lowest branches actually bend towards the ground. Again, variety is caused by the ends of the lower branches turning upwards when they have pushed their way so far out that they press directly towards the light. Thus the growth of the tree, during which it always has to accommodate itself to the power of gravitation pulling downwards, results in forms and proportions that appeal to our sense of beauty.

It is not perhaps wholly fanciful to pursue further the comparison with architecture. Might we not fairly liken such a tree as the oak to the Greek Doric style, the ash and

the birch to the Ionic, the elm and the lime to the Corinthian? The beech and the horse-chestnut we might call domed trees; though a double line of beeches gives us our Gothic vaulting; and the Lombardy poplar is the equivalent of the Gothic spire. We must not push the comparison too far, but it serves at least to emphasise the various types of beauty that we find in trees.

This is perhaps the most convenient place to refer to the problem, which every landscape painter has to face, of the representation of trees. Let it be said at once that it is not to be done by recipe, though recipes have been given. The method of representation must vary according to the kind of tree, and also according to the particular quality that is to be emphasised or effect that is to be seized. It is with trees as with architecture. One painter will wish to emphasise the massive strength of a building, another its intricate variety of detail—mullion and moulding, tracery and elaborate carving. So with trees. No one method will serve for all trees or any tree. One of the best-known sets of recipes was that of J. D. Harding, in praise of whose

drawing of stems and branches Ruskin has just been quoted. Hamerton points out that Harding drew trees "according to his own appreciation of their characteristics," and that "his desire to unite foliage into masses led him, in many cases, to create a mass when the natural beauty of the tree depended upon a delicate termity, and it was a consequence of the same tendency that made him clip away the light sprays from the summits and sides of his trees as a gardener clips a hedge". None the less Hamerton can say: "But in spite of these drawbacks Harding's analysis of trees was so masterly that the thorough study of it must always be a valuable early discipline for landscape painters. It has the immense advantage of clearing away before the learner the terrible intricacy and confusion of the natural forest, and of presenting, as it were, an easier nature already simplified and analysed."

Ruskin notes the same defect as Hamerton in Harding's tree-drawing, in the particular instance of the aspen, of a chalk drawing of which tree, reproduced in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters*, he says that it is "quite

inimitable in the quantity of life and truth obtained by about a quarter of a minute's work, but beginning to show the faulty vagueness and carelessness of modernism. The stems, though beautifully free, are not thoroughly drawn nor rounded; and in the mass of the tree, though well formed, the tremulousness and transparency of leafage are lost." Harding's method, he further says, cannot "express such ultimate truths; his execution, which, *in its way*, no one can at all equal, . . . is yet sternly limited in its reach, being originally based on the assumption that nothing is to be delicately drawn, and that the method is only good which insures specious incompletion".

I recollect once looking at a water-colour drawing of Harding's with an artist who was in his student days when Harding was painting, writing and teaching, and a younger friend, not an artist, to whom Harding was little more than a name, and his method of tree-drawing not even a tradition. The older man praised the drawing; he was even enthusiastic about its merits. To the younger one it was only mannered and superficial. To myself, who

had been a pupil of a pupil and friend of Harding's, it had considerable interest; but I could not fully share our older companion's enthusiasm. Landscape painting has greatly changed in many ways since Harding's day. But to say more about this now would be to anticipate the subject of a later chapter.

One more subject finds an appropriate place here. In writing of trees in art, I shall not distinguish closely between their representation in colour and their representation in black-and-white. It is perhaps obvious that the latter medium is more suited to the rendering of the architecture of trees than to their complete effect. This is particularly true of etching. I was walking the other day with a friend, along a country-road bordered by leafless trees. There was snow on the ground. He suddenly stopped and said, "How this reminds one of an etching!" Leafage, of course, can be adequately represented in colour only; for variety of colour, in sun and shade, and the varying hues of different trees and parts of trees, are of the essence of the complete beauty of leafage. Then again there is the colour of the stem. How, in black-and-white, is it pos-

sible to represent the Scots pine and the silver birch, where the colour-contrast between stem and leafage counts for so much? But for the tree's architecture, black-and-white is, in some respects, the best means of expression. It permits us to concentrate attention on the structural features.

CHAPTER VI

TREES IN ARCHITECTURE

REFERENCE has been made on an earlier page to the unwillingness with which Kingsley had to admit that Gothic architecture had not originated in direct imitation of the forest-aisles. It would, indeed, have been delightful to be able to think that this had been its origin; and it looks so plausible, so probable, to any one who has not traced the development of architecture, that it is perhaps as yet for many people a not discarded superstition.

Indeed the defect in the theory is only that it makes the derivation of the vaulted architecture from the forest-aisle too simple and direct. Though we cannot hold our tree-like Northern architecture to have resulted from a conscious imitation of stalwart bole and lofty stem and branching, intermingling boughs, there was a close connexion, in more ways than one, between the natural shelter of the

forest and the first rude artificial shelters that man made for himself of tree-branches and dried leafage. Kingsley would have liked to believe that the Northern builders had imitated the forest groves *in* which their forefathers had worshipped. The earliest builders made their houses of the trees *which*, and not merely *among which*, they worshipped. This fact has the greatest significance for much that is clearly imitative of trees in modes of architecture that, by millenniums, not by centuries only, preceded the Gothic of the Middle Ages.

The beginning of architecture is illustrated in buildings erected in our own time and in our own country. Methods that in their origin are prehistoric are still in use. Not long since I found shelter, on the edge of a pine-wood, in a rude cart-shed formed of birch-poles, with pine branches and bracken for walls and roof. What is the rude cart-shed of to-day was the dwelling of earlier times. The black-and-white, timber-framed cottage, with its thatched roof, is a palace compared with the dwellings of British chiefs, which were guiltless of such fastidious luxuries as fireplace and

brick chimney. And when the tree-worshipper built himself a house of the trees he worshipped, his god had not ceased to be in becoming his house. The tree-spirit was in the house as it had been in the living tree from which the materials of the house had been taken.

Such beliefs as this persisted into historical times. Mr. Arthur Evans, in *The Mycenæan Tree and Pillar Cult*, quotes a legend preserved by Plutarch. "The divine tamarisk, whose trunk had grown about the chest of Osiris, was cut down by the King 'Malkandros' of Byblos the husband of 'Queen Astarte,' who had been amazed at its size, and made the principal support of his roof,—in other words it was 'the pillar of the house' of Melkart. Removed at Isis' request to enable her to cut out the concealed chest of Osiris, the rest of the wooden pillar was transferred to the temple of Isis at Byblos, where it was still an object of worship in Plutarch's day. . . . In all this," says Mr. Evans, "we see the columnar idol of the architectonic type taking its rise in the most natural way from the hewn trunk of a sacred tree made use of as 'a pillar of the house,' with the object of securing the presence

of the divine 'Stablisher' inherent in the material."

A remarkable example of such a columnar idol is the famous Gate of the Lions at Mycenæ, so called because on a triangular slab of stone over the gateway lintel is carved a column with a lion at each side of it. The column has a capital, and showing above it are imitations in stone of the ends of tree-stems used as a roof. Mr. Evans says, "the divinity here is 'the pillar of Mycenæ' even as Hector is described by Pindar as 'the pillar of Troy'". Gems discovered at Mycenæ and elsewhere have carved on them representations of both pillars and trees with animal supporters. What has been said in an earlier chapter about imitative magic, in which resemblance between things was believed to be sufficient for the production of identical results, will readily enable us to understand that the stone pillar was but a substitute for the tree-trunk. We have already seen that the sacred tree and the sacred pillar are widely found in close association. And the architectural column, and not merely the free-standing tree-trunk or stone pillar, has been worshipped as having the spirit dwelling

within it. Here is a more intimate relation between architecture and the tree or forest even than that which Kingsley would have liked to see in the case of Gothic architecture.

This early belief, identifying the most important parts of a building with the god or spirit, has left its impress, in a way that has immediate interest for us, in the vegetable columns of Egypt, which take the form of the lotus, the blue water-lily, the papyrus, and, probably, the iris; and the same employment of vegetable forms in architecture can be traced in other countries. In time, the original significance of these columns is forgotten, and the column itself becomes merely a part of the structure of the building, having no special sacred character; though the old form of decoration lasts on in the capital and in the fluting of the shaft.

Once the original significance of "the pillar of the house" had been forgotten, the architecture of the earlier civilisations could hardly be felt to bear any marked resemblance to the forest. The great halls of the Egyptian temples are more like caves than woods. In Greece the Mycenæan palaces, as the archæologist

reconstructs them for us, and the temples of the classical era, are the same in principle as the buildings of Egypt. The brick buildings of Babylonia and Assyria, with their vaulted roofs, are still further removed from even remote resemblance to the woodland; and in the arched, vaulted and domed buildings of Rome no such suggestion was possible.

It did become possible when the roof was carried upon vaulting-ribs, branching out from wall and column, and almost inevitably calling the form of the tree to mind. But the graceful, tree-like vaulting of Gothic architecture was only arrived at by experiment after experiment, carried on with blocks of stone, in order to effect a practical not a poetic improvement in the building; and the earliest ribbed vaults furnish no suggestion of branches starting out from parent stems. It was because he knew this that Kingsley renounced with a sigh the idea that "the high embower'd roof"—in Milton's phrase—of the Gothic cathedral had been imitated from the groves in which the heathen ancestors of the Gothic builders had worshipped.

But the builders did see the resemblance of their work to the forest-aisle; and, having

THE ANGEL CHOIR, LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

seen it, set themselves to increase it. In Norman and even in Early English architecture we find the resemblance little if at all worked out; but in the Decorated period, that is to say, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, it is taken up and elaborated. It was not done, however, in a realistic manner; the base of the column was not made to resemble the tree-roots gathering themselves into the stem, to which the column itself was not made to bear any close resemblance; the capital was not abandoned because no such feature had any counterpart in the tree; when, at a later date, it was often dispensed with, the resemblance of the architecture as a whole to vegetation had diminished; the vaulting-ribs never approached a deceptive likeness to leafy branches; all that was done was by the use of the forms of flower and foliage, at certain salient points such as the capital and the keystone, to emphasise the likeness of the whole structure to the forest-aisles, and in the work of art to recall the beauty of nature.

Having thus stated and limited the naturalistic work of the Gothic builders, we may, without danger of being misled by his elo-

quence, read one or two passages in which Ruskin tells of the spirit that animated them. The passages are taken from the oft-quoted chapter on "The Nature of Gothic" in *The Stones of Venice.* After referring to the theory we have already mentioned, "the strange and vain supposition, that the original conception of Gothic architecture had been derived from vegetation, and from the symmetry of avenues, and the interlacing of branches," and saying that "it is a supposition which never could have existed for a moment in the mind of any person acquainted with early Gothic; but however idle as a theory, it is most valuable as a testimony to the character of the perfected style," he continues: "It is precisely because the reverse of this theory is the fact, because the Gothic did not arise out of, but developed itself into, a resemblance to vegetation, that this resemblance is so instructive as an indication of the temper of the builders. It was no chance suggestion of the form of an arch from the bending of a bough, but a gradual and continual discovery of a beauty in natural forms which could be more and more perfectly transferred into those of stone, that influenced

at once the heart of the people and the form of the edifice. The Gothic architecture arose in massy and mountainous strength, axe-hewn, and iron bound, block heaved upon block by the monk's enthusiasm and the soldier's force; and cramped and stanchioned into such weight of grisly wall, as might bury the anchoret in darkness, and beat back the utmost storm of battle, suffering but by the same narrow crosslet the passing of the sunbeam, or of the arrow. Gradually, as that monkish enthusiasm became more thoughtful, and as the sound of war became more and more intermittent beyond the gates of the convent or the keep, the stony pillar grew slender and the vaulted roof grew light, till they had wreathed themselves into the semblance of the summer woods at their fairest, and of the dead field-flowers, long trodden down in blood, sweet monumental statues were set to bloom for ever, beneath the porch of the temple, or the canopy of the tomb."

There is only one statement in this glowing passage as to the literal accuracy of which we need here, for our immediate purpose, express a doubt. Is it not an overstatement to say

that "the stony pillar grew slender and the vaulted roof grew light, till they had wreathed themselves into the semblance of the summer woods at their fairest"? If the exaggeration be pardonable, because of the beauty of the thing respecting which it is made, it is still an exaggeration. The Gothic interior did come to bear a resemblance to the woods, but not to bear the semblance of the summer woods at their fairest. The Gothic builders, one hopes, did not attempt this. They would have overstepped the limitations of their art had they done so. It is one thing to be in a building—a good thing if the building be beautiful; it is another and at least as good a thing to be in the woods. To merge the distinguishing qualities of one in those of the other would merely be to have only one pleasure instead of two.

Kingsley seems to have regretted that this was not done, for he says, in the lecture already quoted: "The mediæval architects were crippled to the last by the tradition of artificial Roman forms. They began improving them into naturalness, without any clear notion of what they wanted; and when that notion

became clear, it was too late. Take, as an instance, the tracery of their windows. It is true, as Mr. Ruskin says, that they began by piercing holes in a wall of the form of a leaf, which developed, in the rose window, into the form of a star inside, and of a flower outside. Look at such aloft there. [Chester Cathedral.] Then, by introducing mullions and traceries into the lower part of the window, they added stem and bough forms to those flower forms. But the two did not fit. The upright mullions break off into bough curves graceful enough: but these are cut short—as I hold, spoiled—by circular and triangular forms of rose and trefoil resting on them as such forms never rest in Nature; and the whole, though beautiful, is only half beautiful. It is fragmentary, unmeaning, barbaric, because unnatural."

Unfortunately for his argument, the account Kingsley gives of the development of mullions and tracery is far from correct. The tracery does not consist of flower forms, but of geometrical forms, often as suggestive of crystals as of flowers, and frequently with the circle as the main motive; and the mullions are not stem and bough forms, but only refinements of

the column. It is what he suggests, the mimicry of trees in stone, that would have been "fragmentary, unmeaning, barbaric, because unnatural". What is natural is to treat stone according to its nature, which is not that of a living tree; and the forms of vegetable or animal life, if used decoratively in connexion with the structure of a building, must be treated conventionally, not in the way of realistic imitation, otherwise the impossible will be attempted and disaster will ensue.

Ruskin utters a warning against this danger. He says, in the chapter of *The Stones of Venice*, already quoted, that designers fall into error "when the temptation of closely imitating nature leads them to forget their own proper ornamental function, and when they lose the power of composition for the sake of graphic truth; as, for instance, in the hawthorn moulding so often spoken of round the porch of Bourges Cathedral, which, though very lovely, might perhaps, as we saw above, have been better, if the old builder, in his excessive desire to make it look like hawthorn, had not painted it green". Ruskin himself, we have seen, parts company with this sound doctrine,

and also with strict accuracy, when he says, as already noted, that the Gothic buildings "wreathed themselves into the semblance of summer woods at their fairest". The semblance is much nearer to winter woods at their barest; for the woods are never much if any barer of foliage than are the piers, columns and vaulting shafts of our Gothic buildings. The point beyond which the imitation of life in architectural structure and decoration may not legitimately go may be difficult to fix, but assuredly it is a long way short of literalness. The lotus, papyrus and other vegetable-formed columns of Egypt would have been a mistake apart from their religious significance; and the Caryatid columns of Greece—human figures bearing a massive entablature and cornice—were little short of barbarism, apart from a similar intention.

We ought not then, in a Gothic building, to feel as if we were in a forest; but our pleasure in the beauty of the architecture may rightly be increased because it has in it some of the elements of forest-beauty. Kingsley thought that Ruskin did not go far enough when he said that the form of the cusped arch was not "in-

tended to imitate a leaf, but to be invested with the same characters of beauty which the designer had discovered in the leaf". Kingsley maintained that "more and more boldly, the mediæval architect learnt to copy boughs, stems, and at last, the whole effect, as far always as stone would allow, of a combination of rock and tree, of grot and grove". One has to say that, unless one's eyes have deceived one in Gothic buildings well-nigh innumerable, their builders did not seek to do what Kingsley says they did. Or, if they were tending that way, it was well that the movement was arrested; for to have gone much further than they did would have been to lose design in imitation, to confuse art with nature. The green-painted hawthorn of Bourges is not a solitary example of naturalism in excess.

If we must think that Ruskin was exaggerating when he said that stony pillar and vaulted roof "wreathed themselves into the semblance of the summer woods at their fairest," we have no quarrel with him when he says that "of the dead field-flowers, long trodden down in blood, sweet monumental statues were set to bloom for ever, beneath the porch of the temple, or

the canopy of the tomb". We have no quarrel, that is to say, with the statement that sweet monumental statues were set in the churches; only they were monuments not of dead flowers trodden down in the battle-field, but of living flowers. One ought not perhaps to find fault with so pretty and pathetic a fancy as this; yet it is mere fancy; and for the sake of it Ruskin momentarily forgets that leaves are much more freely used than flowers in Gothic ornament. But here is a passage, valuable to us in more ways than one, in which, undisturbed by fancy, he literally yet beautifully describes the fact. "In rendering the various circumstances of daily life, Egyptian and Ninevite sculpture is as frank and as diffuse as the Gothic. From the highest pomps of state or triumphs of battle, to the most trivial domestic arts and amusements, all is taken advantage of to fill the field of granite with the perpetual interest of a crowded drama; and the early Lombardic and Romanesque sculpture is equally copious in its description of the familiar circumstances of war and the chase. But in all the scenes portrayed by the workmen of these nations, vegetation occurs only as an explanatory accessory;

the reed is introduced to mark the course of the river, or the tree to mark the covert of the wild beast, or the ambush of the enemy; but there is no especial interest in the forms of the vegetation strong enough to induce them to make it a subject of separate and accurate study. Again, among the nations who followed the arts of design exclusively, the forms of foliage introduced were meagre and general, and their real intricacy and life were neither admired nor expressed. But to the Gothic workman the living foliage became a subject of intense affection, and he struggled to render all its characters with as much accuracy as was compatible with the laws of his design and the nature of his material, not unfrequently tempted in his enthusiasm to transgress the one and disguise the other."

It is perhaps well to say, with reference to this passage, that there were meanings in the older sculpture, beyond those relating to the chase and war, of which, though Ruskin here makes no mention of them, he was not ignorant. We have already taken note of them, and shall have, almost immediately, to refer to them again.

Up to this point the reader may perhaps

SCULPTURE OF THE DUCAL PALACE, VENICE
From Ruskin's "Stones of Venice"

have thought that in this chapter I have been discussing things not quite certainly within the limits suggested by the title of this book. It may not, however, have been quite out of order to have led up to and suggested to him a comparison between the beauty of the woodland and the beauty of the Gothic interior. And if he will admit so much, he will surely admit further and willingly that, if the passage from *The Stones of Venice* just quoted be really accurate, the decorative work of the Gothic sculptors, expressing an intense affection for living foliage, has a value for us not only as art, but for its capacity to quicken our observation of the beauty of nature. We may be inclined to say that, just because the Gothic ornament, at a certain period, can do this for us, it has overstepped the bounds of art. But even if this be so, excessive naturalism in architectural work may not be without its value for the student of nature, and we should put this Gothic sculpture to such good use as it can be to us.

From the point of view we are adopting much might be written about it. Here I purpose to do little more than urge the reader,

when in church or abbey or cathedral, to look carefully at all the sculptured flowers and foliage that are to be seen. The Gothic sculptors took the familiar leaves of the woodland, and flowers of the field, and with a delicate sense of their beauty, cut their forms in stone, with exquisite grace and with constant variation, on the capitals, the bosses, the pendants, cusps and finials, and, in beautiful diaper patterns, on the walls themselves. There was constant variation, I repeat, no mere mechanical repetition of the same forms. They worked their designs mindful always—until the last days of the Gothic style—of the changefulness of the living plant; and, yet, they did not for the most part confuse nature with art, so that it is indeed design that we see; the treatment is decorative, and, because decorative, conventional. The pleasure we get from their work is different from that which we get from nature. The trees are not decorative. We should like them less if they were. They are living, and the conditions of their life do not make for formal symmetry and proportion. But the sculptor's work is not living; and it is used to decorate forms that are not living. If he were literally to imitate

the living forms, there would not be the right relation between the decoration and the structure to be decorated. Architectural sculpture is subject to other laws than those to which painting is subject. Painting applied to architecture is placed under greater restraint with respect to literal imitation than is painting that, not being admittedly the decoration of a wall, can rightly be more naturalistic in treatment. How much more so must this be with sculpture which, in its nature, cannot cover the same range of colour, and of size and tone in relation to distance.

So it is not close imitation of nature we must look for, but only rhythmically beautiful adaptation of natural forms, reminding us of nature, but possessing also a beauty of its own such as nature does not set herself to give. If inevitably less beautiful in some ways than nature, it is permitted to art to be in other ways more beautiful. Man is not condemned to be a mere imitator; it is granted to him to be a creator, and to know the wonderful joy of creation. And both architecture and architectural sculpture are at their best, not when they are aiming to get as close to nature

as possible, but when they are using natural forms to artistic ends. Do these distinctions seem tedious? I will not urge them further. But upon the understanding of them depends the possibility of our getting the greatest variety of enjoyment, one kind from architecture and its attendant sculpture and painting, another kind from sculpture and painting standing alone. None the less, the study of nature makes for perfection in the practice and enjoyment of art, and art sends us back to nature with a keener eye for natural beauty. We shall love the trees the better if we have found how beautiful is the work of the Gothic architects and sculptors.

There is another field of interest in the mediæval sculpture, a very wide and great one, of which, if I may carry through the simple metaphor, I can only open the gate, and ask the reader to glance at it. The old nature-worship lingered and still lingers, as we have seen, in Christendom; and its forms were taken up in Christian art. We will look at just one or two examples that will be a link with the particular form of nature-worship we have had to consider.

The reader will recollect that doves were the intermediaries that declared the will of Zeus that his oracle should be the oaks of Dodona. It was a dove that was sent out by Noah to find if the waters of the Deluge were abating, and returning, after being sent a second time, she brought an olive-leaf in her mouth. The reader's thoughts have already passed, in all probability, to the New Testament, where, again, the dove is the form of the Divine appearance. And does he know the story, it is often told in mediæval art, of the budding of Joseph's rod, by which it was made known that he was to be the husband of Mary? Once more thought will have passed on to one of the favourite subjects of Christian art, both for the sculptor and the painter, the Annunciation, in which the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove, and the Angel Gabriel carries a lily in his hand. So do the old forms persist, though with a new, a deeper meaning.

We can parallel, also, in art, the difference between the earlier and the later conception of paradise, which, at the close of our second chapter, we traced in literature. The old motive, of the tree or pillar of life, with

attendant spirits in the form of birds or animals, persists still, in forms with which we are all familiar; in particular, in the heraldic device of our royal arms, in which the lion and the unicorn are *not* "fighting for the crown". Needless almost to say, it appears frequently in mediæval art, and with something of its old significance. In particular, it is conspicuous on many a sculptured stone of the Cathedral of St. Mark at Venice. Ruskin chose one of these stones for reproduction as part of the design for the cover of *The Stones of Venice*. It shows four peacocks around a central tree-pillar. I have referred to the use of this device at St. Mark's because of another sculptured stone there. In the centre of it there is a throne, and on the throne there is a handled cross—itself an ancient symbol. Within the circular handle there is a lamb. At each side of the throne are six sheep; and these, the sculptor tells us, are intended to represent the Apostles. Behind the sheep are two palm-trees, one at each side, and under each is a fruit-basket. There is no need to interpret this sculpture. It is but a somewhat varied rendering of the New Jeru-

salem of the Apocalypse; and, here, as there, a new meaning is given to the forms of the ancient, the immemorial, tree-worship. Will the reader pardon me if, once more, letting my own feelings have play, I say that it is all wonderfully, solemnly beautiful?

CHAPTER VII

TREES IN PAINTING: TO THE BEGINNING OF MODERN ART

WE have contemporary evidence, found in the caves which were the dwellings of the earliest men of whom we have any knowledge, that, so far back, delight was taken by man in pictorial representation of the living creatures about him. These early essays in art were in the form of sculpture, and, therefore, in the history of art, sculpture precedes painting. The men of the Old Stone Age knew how both to carve in the round and to figure with incised lines on stone and ivory and bone, the forms of the animals that they hunted, and of themselves when engaged in the chase. So early, also, do we find the representation, if not of trees, at least of grass; for on a fragment of ivory found in a cave at La Madelaine, in France, a mammoth is carved, and the long

grass in which it is moving is represented by scratches reaching up to its middle.

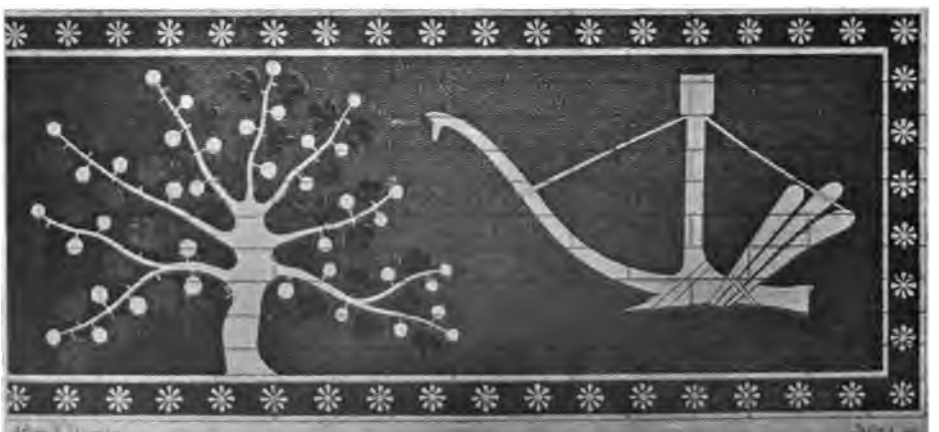
Art hardly less rude and naïve than this is found among the most backward peoples to-day; and it is easy to see that from such art was gradually developed that from which we are now learning so much of the ancient civilisation of the valley of the Nile.

The art of Egypt furnishes us with an extremely interesting form of landscape painting. A plan is given of the scene intended to be represented, and the upright objects in it, and the people, are shown as if they were lying down. Trees are represented by a few lines; but so that we can distinguish various kinds of them, such as the sycamore, the date-tree, and the cruciferous palm. Trees are also seen trained along espaliers. Such art as this has a close resemblance to that of the nursery.

We have an advance in art when we find, as in a painting on wood, in the museum at Ghizeh, a landscape represented as it actually appears to the eye, and not as a combination of plan and actual appearance. And, in particular, trees are now seen rooted in the ground and rising into the air. They are symbols

rather than representations; still they are recognisable. It is evident that the tree was felt to be an interesting feature in the landscape. The Egyptians would derive much of the same kind of pleasure from the trees as we do; and, like other people of early days, would, as we have already seen, have thoughts about them that we have outgrown, in form, if not in spirit.

Trees were quite conventionally represented in the mural sculpture and enamelled bricks of the Assyrian palaces. More often than not they were mere symmetrical patterns based upon tree-form. Occasionally we can recognise such a tree as the palm. Layard shows one with the fronds drawn like a comb or saw. On an enamelled brick wall-face, in the harem of the palace at Khorsabad, there was a representation of a tree showing careful observation, and several touches of realism, although the treatment is mainly decorative. The bole spreads out towards the root. It rises with a curve; in fact, in bole and stem, there is a curve first to the left and then to the right, giving the appearance of graceful, balanced standing that we so often see in actual trees.



ENAMELLED BRICKS, KHORSABAD

From "A History of Art in Chaldæa and Assyria. By Perrot and Chipiez

The branches radiate from the main stem, the highest ones approximating most nearly to the perpendicular, while the lowest ones actually bend towards the ground, and extend, laterally, beyond the upper ones to get their share of air and light. The lowest ones only, on each side, are forked. Stem, branches and fruit—of which there is abundance, equally distributed on the branches—are coloured yellow. The leaves are coloured green. Being only mural decoration, the tree has but two dimensions; a central stem with branches spreading laterally only; everything on one plane. But there is enough to suggest that art, having gone so far, will certainly go further.

Trees figure, in quite conventional, symbolic form, in the objects connected with the tree-worship of Mycenæan Greece, to which, already, repeated reference has been made—indeed, the tree of life, often merely a decorative pattern, is a familiar object in the early art of many countries, including Assyria and Persia; and it survives even in the designs of our carpets.

Of more real artistic interest are two gold cups of the Mycenæan period, found at Vaphio,

near Sparta, on which, are represented, in relief, men and wild cattle; trees are also represented, and with a truth and spirit equal at least to anything that we find in early mediæval art.

Little remains to us of the painting of classical Greece, but it is certain that the rendering of landscape never got beyond a quite primitive stage; and we look in vain for realistic and sympathetic representation of trees. Both in sculpture and painting the human figure almost alone had interest for the Greek, and to this everything else remained merely accessory. In his *Grammar of Greek Art* Prof. Percy Gardner points out that, on the Greek vases, locality was little more than symbolically represented. A pillar stood for a temple or palace, a tripod or altar for a sacred place, a crab or a shell-fish for the sea-shore. A single tree would do duty for a forest. There was often even less than this, for the various features of landscape were frequently personified as men or dæmons or nymphs. Much as we have learned in art from the Greeks, it is clear that we must not go to them for instruction in the pictorial representation of trees.

Græco-Roman art shows an advance in the

treatment of landscape, and also in tree-drawing. We find trees that seem to have lost their symmetry and uprightness under the pressure of many a gale. There is an approach to the feeling of leafiness and the suggestion of a multitude of branches, and a still greater multitude of leaves, which are features of the tree that no modern artist would ignore. But we are still far from that full recognition of the visible beauty of nature which, alone, makes possible the fully sympathetic representation of trees. The Roman, indeed, having beliefs only different in degree from those of the Greeks, who believed that Zeus dwelt in the oaks of Dodona, or the Mycenæans, who believed that the tutelary spirit dwelt in the sculptured column over the entrance to the city, was only less indifferent than they to the exact representation of natural objects. A rudely pictured tree or a mere tree-pillar or stone-pillar sufficed for the all-important purpose of a dwelling for the spirit; just as even now it remains true that miracle-working pictures and statues are but poor art. Generally, then, though the Græco-Roman artists did show some advance in the rendering of land-

scape, and of trees as an important feature in landscape, what they felt and saw in this way, and therefore what they pictured, was far removed from the landscape and tree-painting of modern times.

We fare little better when we come to early Christian and mediæval art. In the chapter of the third volume of *Modern Painters* entitled "Of the Novelty of Landscape," Ruskin imagines the reader to make his first acquaintance of modern landscape painting in the room of the Old Water Colour Society, and pictures his surprise to find, comparing the paintings there with those of Greece, Rome and the Middle Ages, that "mountains, instead of being used only as a blue ground for the relief of the heads of saints, were themselves the exclusive subjects of reverent contemplation; that their ravines, and peaks, and forests, were all painted with an appearance of as much enthusiasm as had formerly been devoted to the dimples of beauty, or the frowns of asceticism; and that all the living interest which was still supposed necessary to the scene, might be supplied by a traveller in a slouched hat, a beggar in a scarlet cloak, or, in default of these,

even by a heron or a wild duck". To a knight or monk of the Middle Ages, he says, the sight of modern landscape paintings would probably suggest the reflection, "here are human beings spending the whole of their lives in making pictures of bits of stone and runlets of water, withered sticks and flying fogs, and actually not a picture of the gods or the heroes! none of the saints or the martyrs! none of the angels and demons! none of councils or battles, or any other single thing worth the thought of a man! trees and clouds, indeed! as if I should not see as many trees as I cared to see, and more, in the first half of my day's journey to-morrow, or as if it mattered to any man whether the sky were clear or cloudy, so long as his armour did not get too hot in the sun!"

The woods and forests, we recollect, filled the mediæval mind with fear. They were the abodes of evil spirits. To Dante it was a dreadful thing to be lost in *una selva selvaggia*, a wild wood. Mr. Briton Rivière has painted a picture of a knight who, riding into the forest gloom, where owls peep out from holes in the trees, where bats fly about blindly, and

where the snakes wriggle among the roots, holds up his cross-hilted sword for protection against evil, and murmurs, "*In manus tuas Domine!*" How different is this from Robert Louis Stevenson, lying out among the trees at night, with only his donkey, Modestine, for a companion. "What seems a kind of temporal death," he says, "to people choked between walls and curtains, is only a light and living slumber to the man who sleeps a-field. All night long he can hear nature breathing deeply and freely; even as she takes her rest, she turns and smiles; and there is one stirring hour unknown to those who dwell in houses, when a wakeful influence goes abroad over the sleeping hemisphere, and all the world are on their feet. It is then that the cock first crows, not this time to announce the dawn, but like a cheerful watchman speeding the course of night. Cattle awake on the meadows; sheep break their fast on dewy hill-sides, and change to a new lair among the ferns; and houseless men, who have lain down with the fowls, open their dim eyes and behold the beauty of the night." This is the attitude towards nature, the feeling for its beauty, and its

varied life, akin to, yet widely different from, our own, that renders modern landscape painting possible. But not until the close of the Middle Ages was this modern spirit born. Christianity in its early days, did not, because it could not, eradicate the animistic belief. It has not yet, as we already know, been wholly eradicated. The spirits still lived on, though mainly as evil spirits, against whom the Christian, as in the supposed case of Mr. Briton Rivière's knight, could defend himself by use of the formulæ of his faith. Still, even under these conditions, there was some advance in the direction in which art has now gone so far, gone, indeed, in purpose, if not in actual achievement, to the utmost limit. We do, to-day, seek to represent nature as it is and for its own sake.

In the Catacombs, which preserve for us very early, if not the earliest Christian art, the style is Græco-Roman; and, indeed, Pagan myths are often used in the wall and ceiling-paintings with a Christian significance; as, for instance, when Orpheus, charming the wild beasts with the music of his lyre, symbolises Christ subduing the wild passions of the human heart. Scenes from the Old and New Testaments are

also represented; and landscape not infrequently appears as a setting for the figures. Trees are represented, at times quite conventionally, with stiff masses of foliage; though, even in such cases, we see the roots gathering themselves up into the bole, the stems lean, and even curve back on themselves, and the stumps are shown where branches have been cut or broken off. In the cemetery of Domitilla there is a wall-painting representing the Good Shepherd, with the lamb across His shoulders, and a staff in His hand. Behind Him are two trees of the character just described. Other figures represent the four seasons. Winter, with a spade over his shoulder, warms himself at a fire; Spring is gathering roses; Summer is cutting the corn; Autumn holds a bunch of grapes in one hand and a horn of plenty in the other. Clouds float in the sky above. We are a long way yet from modern landscape; but this design is prophetic of it.

In the same cemetery is a landscape more sympathetically represented, with buildings, people—with whom is a child—animals, and trees much more freely and broadly treated. Elsewhere we have the rose, stalks and ears of

corn, the vine and the laurel, used decoratively, in scrolls, with birds perched on the branches, and nests from which little open beaks peep out. This is in the crypt of St. Januarius, in the cemetery of Prætextatus; and, in a frieze below the scrolls, which run in a series of bands, boys, gathering roses, represent Spring-time; cutting, gathering and threshing corn, they stand for Summer; in Autumn they gather grapes; in Winter they rear ladders against the olive-trees, and gather the olives.

Here again we have a frank expression of joy in the beauty and fruitfulness of the earth, and an attempt to communicate the feeling to others. But it is not done in the way of the modern landscape painter. The reader may have been reminded, by the description just given of the representation of the four seasons by the artist of the Catacombs, of our following the cycle of the year in an earlier chapter. But we were concerned mainly with the look of things, and of things regarded, not individually, but together, not sky alone, cloudy or clear; then trees alone; then hills alone; and so with all other natural objects. The primitive artist looked at these things separately. I do not

mean that he did not include many of them in one pictured scene. But he did not picture them in their true relations of colour and tone, and even size. The difference in tone between a tree a hundred yards away, and another tree of the same kind half a mile away, did not interest him as an artist, any more than such a problem, and similar ones, interest children drawing in the nursery.

The art of the early Middle Ages showed less interest in nature even than that of the Catacombs. Christianity lost its early joyousness. The great problem as stated by the Church, was not so much to live rightly in this world, as to believe rightly, so that happiness might be secured in the world to come. Religion, of course, included more than this. But this aspect of it received great emphasis; and was the one almost exclusively dealt with by art; and art, controlled by the Church, dealt with little but religion. The world was a sinful and lost world; its doom might come upon it at any time. To have the thoughts turned to the world behind this world, and to the beings there, Divine and between the Divine and the human, was the prime necessity. Hence art

SEPTEMBER. HUNTING—PASTURING SWINE
From an eleventh century calendar. MS. Cott. Jul. A. vi

was quite content with gold backgrounds for its figures, or such rude representations of buildings and landscape as would suggest the place where the event to be meditated upon took place.

We need not look, therefore, for any sympathetic representation of trees. Occasionally, however, we find, as we have already done in pre-Christian art, that interest in the things of nature for their own sake does exist, and must sooner or later be quickened into vigorous life. For example, in an eleventh-century English hymnal, there is a calendar, and the months of the year are pictorially represented. In two of the scenes oak-trees appear, and the massive bole of the tree, its tortuous branches and the form of the leaf, are all clearly recorded, as well as the acorns. But in "September," where swine are seen feeding on the acorns, they are half the height of the trees!

It is in Italy, where the great modern development of painting originated and for centuries was in advance of the art of any other country, that we find, as one incident of its growth, an increased interest in the life and beauty of nature. An interest in nature for

its own sake begins, by common consent, about the time of Giotto, that is to say, early in the fourteenth century. Until the seventeenth century, landscape is rarely rendered except as a setting for figures; but even though put to this subordinate use alone, the feeling for its interest and beauty, for the beauty, that is, of all the objects in a scene in relation to each other, steadily grows both in range and intensity; and the record becomes both more subtle and more accurate.

Here, on the threshold of modern painting, and, in particular, of the modern painting of trees, it may be well for us to have in mind, in general terms, what has been attained up to the present time in their representation. What are the facts that our landscape painters now observe and record? It may easily be possible to add something to the following list; but even if it be not complete it will suffice for our immediate purpose.

The modern artist who, in the way described by Ruskin in the imaginary visit to an Old Water Colour Society's Exhibition, paints a landscape for its own sake, and not as a mere setting for figures, pictures trees of their correct,

relative size, and so gives us the impression of the great height of the larger trees in relation to our own height. A lofty and widespreading tree has an impressiveness, when we think of it as having grown from seed, drawn its nourishment from earth and air, and as now sustaining itself against the force of gravitation and the might of the tempest, that is certainly not less than the impressiveness of the inert mountain mass. This effect of the tree upon us is never so much as suggested in early art. Then there is the marvellous intricacy of the branches, and the innumerable company of the leaves; the individual leaves being indistinguishable, and the painter being obliged, if he is correctly to represent the tree's appearance, to paint not leaves, but leafiness—leaf-masses. Then, he finds trees growing singly, or in small groups, or in large numbers forming woods or forests. The different kinds of trees vary in form and colour. Some are delicately beautiful, some mingle grace with strength, in others strength is the chief obvious quality. Again there are the differences between youth, maturity and age; and a tree may be well-nigh perfect in form, or it may have suffered through adverse

conditions, and be ill or misshapenly grown, or it may have been stricken by lightning or tempest. The changes through the seasons of the year have also to be recorded. Again there is the varying effect of the tree in relation to the sky, sometimes it is light against dark, sometimes dark against light. In fact, in recent art, almost the chief pre-occupation of the painter is the varying effect of trees under diverse conditions of light and atmosphere. The tree is swathed in atmosphere, which may be clear or misty, full of sunlight or merely of diffused light under a cloudy sky; or again, we have the "moonlight air," or mere starlight, or the cloudy blackness, in which the trees appear as vast, uncertain shapes. Lastly, we note that trees are sometimes in motion, sometimes at rest. In previous chapters all these various facts, and varieties of effect, have been incidentally referred to. Here they are grouped together—and as already hinted, I do not pause to consider whether or not they are exhaustive—so that we may realise the goal towards which the pictorial representation of trees has been tending.

Returning to our Italian painters, we will

illustrate the development of tree-painting, to begin with, from the work of the Florentines. Giotto and his school occupy practically the whole of the fourteenth century. Their representation of trees shows only a slight advance on the earlier work. Still, for the most part, they are made little if any more than the height of the men and women who move amongst them; there is but slight feeling for mass, which is rendered, if at all, as in "The Triumph of Death" in the *Campo Santo* at Pisa, by the laborious painting of a large number of separate leaves. Generally, we have single trees, with one straight stem, few branches, and a symmetrical, flat oval head, composed of leaves too large in relation to the size of the tree. The subtleties of rendering, mentioned above, are entirely wanting.

In the fifteenth century there is a marked advance in the rendering of landscape, and of trees as a principal feature in it. Fra Angelico, though holding back from much in the art movement of his time, was a leader in this respect. He observed the gradations of tone in the sky. His trees, though still stiff and symmetrical, and of small size, have a feeling

of mass, are within the atmosphere, and are clearly distinguishable as cypress, olive, palm, etc. Masaccio, also, here as in other respects, shows an advance in naturalism. Fra Angelico's pupil, Benozzo Gozzoli, in the frescoes of the Riccardi Palace, and elsewhere, introduces trees which, if still conventionally formal, do get up in height above the figures, and attain much more nearly to their proper place in the landscape. This is even more true of the work of Botticelli. In the "Primavera," Venus and her train are passing through a wood which does seem to overshadow them. There is a distinct feeling both for mass and intricacy. This is also true of the wood in "Venus Rising from the Sea," and also of the one in "The Adoration of the Shepherds" in our National Gallery. The same thing is observable in the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel at Rome. There is also a distinct feeling for atmosphere; the light shows strongly between the stems of the trees, which are placed so as to conceal portions of the landscape, and leave open other portions, thus recognising what has been previously noticed as one of the great sources of pleasure in a wooded landscape.

Mansell

PRIMAVERA
By Sandro Botticelli

These few instances suffice to show that the mediæval point of view, as represented in the work even of Giotto and his school, was superseded by the Florentine painters of the fifteenth century.

The fifteenth-century Venetian painter, Giovanni Bellini, in his picture "The Death of St. Peter Martyr," in our National Gallery, painted probably early in the sixteenth century, is still partly mediæval in his tree-painting. The trees tower above the figures, and there is a sense of mass; but it is obtained by the laborious painting of a great number of individual leaves. But the rendering of landscape, and of atmospheric quality, in this picture, as again in the same painter's "Christ's Agony in the Garden," also in our National Gallery, is far in advance of contemporary Florentine work. Of the latter picture, Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse says: "We see for the first time an attempt to render a particular effect of light, the first twilight picture with clouds rosy with lingering gleams of sunset, and light shining from the sky on hill and town—the first in which a head is seen in shadow against a brilliant sky". Since Bellini's time how often

have trees seen against a similar sky sufficed for the sole motive of a picture!

In the earlier years of the sixteenth century, Raphael, and his Florentine contemporaries, were not as far advanced as Giovanni Bellini in the rendering of landscape, and it is to Bellini's great pupil, the Venetian, Titian, that we go for further advance in the rendering of trees. The Venetians were better qualified than the painters of the schools of Central Italy, than the men of Umbria and Tuscany, truthfully and sympathetically to interpret nature. Their spirit was essentially positive and worldly, not contemplative, mystical-idealist. They handle religious subjects in the spirit of the pageants, and lavish hospitalities proper to the city that held "the gorgeous East in fee". Their natural surroundings, as often observed in connexion with their art, were remarkable for glorious light and colour, for light and colour in one, rather than for form. There were the long reaches of the lagoons, across which, when, on clear calm days, sky and sea are almost of one palpitating blue, the islands seem as if they were suspended in mid air. And far away the mountains gleam like precious

stones. So the Venetians were colourists rather than designers; and nowadays painters who are, above all, designers, such as Burne-Jones, turn rather to the Florentines and Umbrians than to them for instruction and inspiration, or, if they go to the Venetians, single out for especial affection and praise, Giovanni Bellini and Carpaccio, who come nearer than the later masters to the mid-Italians. Thus Burne-Jones once wrote to a friend in Italy: "Of all things do go to the little chapel of S. Giorgio di Schiavoni, where the Carpaccios are. The tiniest church that ever was, like a very small London drawing-room—but with pictures!!! And whenever you see Carpaccio give him my love, and whenever you see Bellini give him my adoration, for none is like him—John, that is, for his brother I only respect."

On the other hand Titian came much less near to Burne-Jones's heart, yet it is to him we go, more than to Bellini and Carpaccio, for a "forward movement" in the painting of landscape, and particularly, here, of trees. The wondrous beauty of the sea, the mountains and the woodland, was to him something to be re-

joiced in and to be represented for its own sake, worthy to come into art almost if not wholly independently of figures, not as a mere background to them, a subordinate element only, and only formally treated. He hardly quite passes the boundary and becomes in any considerable part of his work a landscape painter; but he is a keenly observant and sympathetic painter of landscape.

His trees are remarkable, not only for the rendering of stem and branch and leafage, but because in size and tone and value, they take their right place in the landscape. We are far away, in his pictures, from the formal toy-trees of the fifteenth-century Italians; and while we feel Botticelli to have been reaching after the truth, we are ready to declare that Titian has attained it. And a large measure of truth he did, indeed, attain.

This is evinced, in such pictures of his, in our National Gallery, as "Bacchus and Ariadne," "Noli me Tangere," and "The Repose," though they also show that he would not sacrifice tone and harmonious colour to the literal rendering of fact. Still Ruskin can praise the botanical accuracy of the flowers in

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

By Titian From the painting in the National Gallery

the foreground of the "Bacchus and Ariadne," while noting that there is given nothing "beyond the simple forms and hues of the flowers, even those hues themselves being simplified and broadly rendered". He ranks Titian with Correggio and Giorgione as having accomplished the difficult task of rightly painting a leaf, though it put him to "thoughtful trouble". But "Titian's distant branches," he says, "are ponderous flakes as if covered with sea-weed, while Veronese's and Raphael's are conventional, being exquisitely ornamental arrangements of small perfect leaves".

Titian's trees tell much of their life's story. We can see how they have been affected by the nature of their situation; broken boughs declare the losses they have had; new shoots tell of the efforts they have made to recoup themselves. Was Titian's observation of trees quickened by the fact that his brother Francesco was a timber merchant? As the two walked together in the woods, the severely utilitarian comments of the man of business may have led to a scrutiny of the trees by the artist, with results in his case other than calculation of the value of the timber to be obtained from

them, though Titian was not to be despised as a business man. Anyhow, he brings us much further on the way towards modern tree-painting.

Such men, again, as Salvator Rosa, with his "landscape of passion and portent," and the Poussins, to whom a forest has become a far from merely dreadful place, helped to intensify and increase the interest taken in the woodland as a subject, all the errors that Ruskin has found in their work notwithstanding.

But the man who, up to the close of the seventeenth century, did more than any other to quicken interest in landscape, was the Frenchman, Claude Lorrain. Here, again, the young Ruskin of *Modern Painters* took up a position which, however right absolutely, at least as to what he condemned, was very doubtfully right as to the omission to recognise good qualities, and to allow for the kind of interest taken in landscape in the painter's own time. Hamerton, on the other hand, looks for and finds much good in him. "The essential superiority of Claude Lorrain over all his predecessors," he says, "and nearly all

Hanfstaengl

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

By Claude. From the painting at Dresden

who have come after him, was in the quiet elegance of his taste, which is conspicuous in nothing so much as in the arrangement of his sylvan compositions. He was not so vigorous a realist as Dürer, nor so strong a draughtsman as Titian, but in a certain aptitude for seizing upon the more refined suggestions of Nature he was, so far as sylvan subjects are concerned, incomparably superior to both. His massive and full-foliaged trees express sylvan richness with a superb abundance, whilst the slender trees whose trunks prettily cross each other in lighter groupings are drawn with a rare appreciation of their grace, and in both cases equally the forms are controlled by an instinctive love of beauty in composition."

It is easy, of course, for a botanist to find error after error in Claude's tree-drawing. His touch is conventional and monotonous, his drawing of stems and branches, and of their ramification, is inaccurate—for one thing he makes them taper throughout their length, instead of diminishing their girth at the points of subdivision. Only in the most general way does he distinguish one kind of tree from another; and his trees are all so graceful and

healthy, that they do not seem ever to have had any difficulties to contend with. Nevertheless, what Hamerton says of him is entirely justified by reference to his work itself. His trees are conventional, but they are handsome, massy, full of the sense of shadiness, and they make us feel how much more beautiful the world is because there are trees in it.

No greater compliment was ever paid to Claude than when Turner bequeathed two pictures to the nation on condition that they should hang side by side with two of Claude's pictures in the National Gallery. Turner was not the man to be proud of beating one who was not worth beating; and he has not beaten Claude in every particular. There are purely artistic qualities in Claude's work—qualities, that is, apart from truthfulness of representation —from which Turner learned much, and in which he by no means always outshone his predecessor. And for these qualities, such as grace, suavity, and beauty of composition, Claude has been, and doubtless always will be, an exemplar from whom the greatest need not be ashamed to learn. His influence has been conspicuously great in modern English and

French landscape art; and, in the constant action and re-action of art and nature, when nature threatens to take too much of the field to itself, a return to Claude will always be good as a means of restoring a more equitable distribution.

Claude's influence is to be seen in our own country in the work of Richard Wilson, Turner and others. Another influence is to be seen in the work of the Norwich School, that of the Dutch landscape painters. Here again a Ruskin can detect many lapses from truth. But the Dutch painters, with all their mannerism and mechanical touch, did, none the less, take a kindly interest in such landscape as was accessible to them. It is not merely an affectation that leads to such high prices being given now for Hobbema's works. His pictures do interpret, with much sympathy and insight, the quiet charm of a flat and often well-wooded country; and they have qualities of tone and colour, and a pleasantness of composition, both in mass and light, that quite ingratiates them to our feeling. Who that has seen the picture has not a strong affection for the somewhat unkindly treated trees in his "The Avenue, Middelharnis," in our National Gallery?

Another painter on the confines of the art of our own time, Rubens, should not perhaps go unmentioned here. His landscapes have all the vigour and powerful colour and light of his figure-subjects. His trees, though lacking in detailed truth, have much individuality and force of character; and many artists of later date have gained by coming under his influence. I must go back in date to mention also among the Northern artists, Albert Dürer, who, for his day, was keenly observant of nature and of trees as conspicuous features in the landscape, rendering them with sympathetic truthfulness.

This has been but an incomplete survey. But it will have served its purpose if it has shown how, from using mere signs or symbols for trees, art had progressed, so far, until it was prepared for the fullest interpretation of tree-life and character. We have now to see how this progress has been continued down to our own day.

CHAPTER VIII

TREES IN MODERN PAINTING

THE use of the words ancient, mediæval and modern is admittedly somewhat arbitrary. There are ways in which we may be less modern than the ancients. It is only recently, for example, that we have, in one particular, become as up to date as the ancient Assyrians: in permitting married women to have property of their own!

There is, however, good reason for regarding art as having, from the later years of the seventeenth century, entered upon a fresh chapter of its history. It did then begin to look at life and nature with a much clearer purpose to interpret them as they really were than had been generally the case in earlier times. This, however, be it said, was not the beginning of a tendency, but the bringing of it into full activity.

I must say a word at this point as to the

limits within which the present chapter is confined. With regret I have found it necessary to restrict myself to a sketch, and that a summary one, of the treatment of trees in English art alone. The aim of the whole book, however, in any part of it, is not to exhaust the subject. It seeks merely to introduce it to such readers as may not yet have interested themselves in it. And if any reader is not acquainted with the landscape art, and in particular, the variously interpretative tree-painting of—to name but three of the leaders of one group of men—such painters as Corot, Rousseau and Daubigny, I hope it may not be long before he finds his way to them.

It has been said, and not by his countrymen only, that modern painting begins with Hogarth. His younger contemporary, Richard Wilson, may be regarded as at least the immediate forerunner of modern landscape painting. It has too often been assumed, on an imperfect acquaintance with his works, that he was little, if anything, more than an imitator of the Poussins and Claude; but there are English and Welsh landscapes by him that show, in many respects, a much more closely observant

and subtle appreciation than theirs of the truth and beauty of nature. Still, his landscapes are, in the main, compositions; and his trees are conventional in character and but little individualised. It does not seem as if they had ever become to him much more than incidents, though very picturesque ones, in the general scene; he does not turn to them, and make the interpretation of their life and beauty to any extent a main feature in his work.

Thomas Gainsborough, younger than Wilson by thirteen years, has achieved fame both as a portrait painter and as a landscape painter, the relative estimate in which his portraits and his landscapes have been held varying greatly from time to time. Redgrave, in *A Century of Painters of the English School*, describes Reynolds's statement that "it is difficult to determine whether Gainsborough's portraits were most admirable for exact truth of resemblance, or his landscapes for a portrait-like representation of Nature," as "a strange judgment, written more with a view to a well-rounded period than to any true criticism on his rival's landscape art, which was anything but portrait-like. It would puzzle a critic,"

continues Redgrave, "to say what his trees really are, and to point out in his landscapes the distinctive differences between oak and beech, and elm." Redgrave does not regard this as a defect, saying that Gainsborough "gave us more of Nature than any merely imitative rendering could do".

Here, once more, we are on the ever difficult ground of the relation of art to nature. Hamerton notes that there is no niggling, there are no mere spotty touches in Gainsborough's foliage, and says that "though Gainsborough was not a botanical landscape painter he had a profound sense of sylvan beauty and majesty". Ruskin's verdict on Gainsborough's landscapes is "that they are rather motives of feeling and colour than earnest studies; that their execution is in some degree mannered, and always hasty; that they are altogether wanting in affectionate detail, and that their colour is in some measure dependent on a bituminous brown and conventional green, which have more of science than of truth in them".

These characteristics are indiscriminately labelled faults. At the worst they are no more than limitations; and Gainsborough's wooded

VIEW OF DEDHAM

From the oil painting by Thomas Gainsborough in the National Gallery

landscapes will give pleasure to all but the exactingly realistic critic to whom facts are everything and "motives of feeling and colour" and "profound sense of sylvan beauty and majesty" quite secondary matters. One need not be a botanist to see that Gainsborough's trees are lacking in individual character. We get the same kind of tree throughout the picture, only varied a little in form, and as Redgrave more than hints, it is well not to inquire too closely into its identity. But the painter does take us into the English woodland, we are amid undergrowth beneath the shade of trees; and between their stems, and above the trees lower down the hill, we see the sunlit valley-fields, and, beyond, the church and houses of the little town, showing through an opening in the trees across the valley, the scene being closed by the opposite well-wooded hill-side. This is what such a picture as the "View of Dedham" does for us; and it, and many other landscapes of the same kind from the same hand, often come to mind when we are amid scenes similar to those which Gainsborough painted. In them all there is a pervading feeling of leafiness, and his interest in trees is greater than that of Wilson.

John Crome, the founder of the Norwich School of landscape painting, and his pupils James Stark and George Vincent, were much influenced, as I have already mentioned, by the work of such Dutch painters as Hobbema and Ruysdael. Their trees are strongly reminiscent of those of Hobbema; but they are more stiff in the rendering both of branch and leafage. It is difficult to think of such branches as waving in the wind, or of the leaves being huddled by it into confused masses. And, again, as with Gainsborough, we need not search through their pictures for this, that and the other tree that we know well in nature. It must suffice if we can distinguish, say, the oak. But we get pleasant renderings of the woodland, if conventional in both form and colour.

With John Constable there comes a change. His art is a distinct step in advance. It greatly influenced the landscape painting of France and, through France, that of other countries. There is no bituminous brown in his pictures. He found that England was, as Blake also saw it, a "green and pleasant land," and he painted it as he saw it. "He never thought nature *too green*," says Redgrave, "nor left the full foliage

of summer for the brown tints of sun-dried autumn. Was not England above all things green? Was it not so distinguished from other lands? So he thought, and so he ever painted."

Hamerton perplexingly says that "the only landscape painter who ever dedicated his powers to this season of the year [spring] with a devotion all but exclusive of every other was Constable". It is truer to say that he devoted himself to spring *and summer*, to the almost absolute exclusion of autumn. In his most famous pictures the trees are in full leaf. Such, for instance, are "The Hay Wain," the very title of which fixes the time of the year; and when we look closely, we find that the elder tree is in flower. "The Cornfield" bespeaks a still later season. It was the green time of the year, and not either spring or summer alone, to which he devoted himself; though, undoubtedly, he especially loved the freshness of spring-time, and delighted in the sparkle of the sunlight on the leafage when it had been drenched by a passing shower.

In *Modern Painters*, Ruskin, one cannot but think, unduly depreciates Constable, dwelling

at length on his faults and bringing in his merits as little more than justification for a recommendation to mercy. He defends this treatment of Constable on the ground that the painter's biographer, Leslie, had "suffered his personal regard for Constable so far to prevail over his judgment as to bring him forward as a great artist, comparable in some kind with Turner". So Ruskin, eager to maintain the unrivalled pre-eminence of Turner, says all he can in depreciation of Constable. This is not quite the best way in which to arrive at a well-balanced critical judgment; and we find Ruskin saying of an engraving in *Modern Painters:* "The next example is an aspen of Constable's, on the left in the frontispiece to Mr. Leslie's life of him. Here we have arrived at the point of total worthlessness, the tree being as flat as the old purist one, but, besides, wholly false in ramification, idle, and undefined in every respect; it being, however just possible still to discern what the tree is meant for, and therefore the type of the worst modernism not being completely established."

Unless we may assume that Ruskin has here taken an unrepresentative example of Con-

stable's tree-drawing, or unless he be thinking of one thing and Hamerton of another, the following statement of the latter writer must be perplexing: "Nothing is more conspicuous in Constable than the entirely non-mechanical character of his touch on trees". Perhaps we may find a solution of the difficulty in another passage in *Modern Painters*, in which Ruskin says what he can in praise of Constable: "There is a strange want of depth in the mind which has no pleasure in sunbeams but when piercing painfully through clouds, nor in foliage but when shaken by the wind, nor in light itself but when flickering, glistening, restless and feeble. Yet, with all these deductions, his works are to be deeply respected, as thoroughly original, thoroughly honest, free from affectation, manly in manner, frequently successful in cool colour, and realising certain motives of English scenery, with perhaps as much affection as such scenery, unless when regarded through media of feeling derived from higher sources, is calculated to inspire."

We breathe again. It is still permissible to enjoy Constable; and the pleasure we get from his pictures, which are almost always of the

woodland, or of well-wooded country, is of a kind that we seldom if ever get from Turner. And it is because the qualities that Ruskin finds wanting in his work are of little value for the expression of the particular pleasure that the country-side gave him, that they are not to be found in his work. It is delightful to breathe pure air. It is delightful to be out on a fresh, showery day, when sunshine and shower alternate. It is pleasant to feel the rain in one's face. It is difficult not to think that the trees share in our delight. Unconsciously they do, at least they benefit. That which gives health and healthy pleasure to us gives health to them. It is exhilarating, on such a day, to look over leagues of country, studded with trees, and feel that there are inexhaustible stores of light and air. This is what Constable felt and what he makes us feel.

Doubtless there is "feeling derived from higher sources" than this. But this feeling at least comes to us direct from nature. And it is not dependent on careful attention to the ramification of branches, and ability to recognise a particular kind of tree when we see it.

TREES NEAR HAMPSTEAD CHURCH
From a painting by John Constable in the South Kensington Museum

All the same, Constable's rendering of ramification is not always despicable; his treatment of foliage has indeed the quality that Hamerton describes; and he does not, like so many of his predecessors, repeat the same kind of tree over and over again. He may not insist on the minutiæ of difference; but we do feel to be amongst trees which, if we looked closely at them, would prove to be oak, elm, lime, beech and other kinds. More than this was not necessary for his main purpose, which was at least delightful and wholesome; and was compatible with not a little beauty in the means of expression. It is not within our scope to attempt an appreciation of Constable's art as a whole. It is enough if a hint has been given as to the nature of his enjoyment of the woodland, and the means adopted by him to quicken the like enjoyment in others.

One further point, however, should be mentioned. Landscape painters before Constable had almost invariably painted with the sun behind them. Constable delighted to paint with the sun before him, though high overhead. Thus he saw the trees as great dark masses, with sparkles of light dancing here and there

upon the leaves. This sparkle was known to his contemporaries as "Constable's snow"; which suggests, either that the effect was not well rendered, or that those who thus named it had not observed the effect in nature—probably the latter. This is the "flickering, glistening, restless light" of Ruskin's depreciation. Redgrave says that "it is told of Chantrey—who, as having begun art as a landscape painter, ought to have had some sense of nature—that he took the brush out of our painter's hands on one of the varnishing days, and as poor Constable said, 'brushed away all his dew'; passed a dirty brown glaze over all his truthful sparkle, to tone it down to the dull hue of conventional *truth*".

Just one other point before we leave Constable. Redgrave refers to the "commencements" that he used to make for his pictures, sometimes of the same size as the completed pictures, which he worked broadly, with very little detail, and which, as soon as he was satisfied with the indications they contained, he abandoned, and began again on a new canvas, "endeavouring to retain the fine qualities of the studied sketch, adding to it such an amount

of completeness and detail as could be given without loss of the higher qualities of breadth and general truth". In this endeavour, however, he by no means always succeeded; and the studied sketches are often finer in the particular quality he sought than are the finished pictures. For some purposes, then, the detailed truth that Ruskin missed in his work was not desirable. Ruskin would have held this to be a sacrifice of the higher to the lower qualities. To Redgrave the qualities that Constable sought, with as much detailed truth as was compatible with them, were the higher ones.

We shall find this comment on Constable's studied sketches useful when we come to consider the work of Turner, who, born in 1775, was Constable's senior by just a little more than a year. Perhaps it may be well to give one or two more dates. Wilson was born in 1714, Gainsborough in 1727, "Old Crome" in 1768. Constable's art is closer to nature in one way than that of his predecessors. Turner's art is closer to nature in a different way, and farther from it in other ways. But before dealing with Turner it is necessary to say something about the early school of English water-colour painters.

Water-colour painting, in the sense of the use of pigments mixed, not with oil, but with water strengthened with some glutinous substance, is, of course, older than oil-painting. But in the eighteenth century certain English artists began to mix their pigments with water only, and this, not for sketches and studies only, but for finished pictures. This new form of art began with such men as Thomas Sandby, who was born in 1721, and Paul Sandby, his brother, born in 1725. John Robert Cozens, born in 1752, showed great skill in the rendering of atmosphere, and his work was greatly admired by Constable, who declared him to be the greatest genius who had ever touched landscape. In the early stages of the art, colour was obtained by slightly tinting drawings already carried towards completion in pen-outline and washes in neutral tint. Thomas Girtin and Turner, who were born in the same year, carried the art further by painting at once in full, true colour.

The importance of this art for our immediate purpose is that much of Turner's most important work was done in water-colour; in which medium also, so easily employable in

the open air, he executed thousands of sketches and studies, thereby amassing a wonderful knowledge of natural fact. The tree-drawing of the earlier water-colourists had been very conventional; with Turner, who was a close observer, and had a wonderful visual memory, it became remarkable for detailed truth.

Not that Turner bound himself to literal fidelity to fact. He was first and foremost an artist, and used his great knowledge of nature to artistic ends; but probably no other painter has ever woven so much fact into the texture of his art-work. He did not, as did Constable, seek to give an illusory feeling of actuality. We rarely feel when before his pictures and drawings such emotion as we feel when before a natural scene. He laid in his work broadly, but it was not the breadth of natural effect, but of artificially disposed form and colour, based upon, but not closely imitated from nature. Then he added the details; and in the result, we have great beauty, and an astonishing assemblage of facts, but a whole that is distinctly artificial—using the word with no depreciatory significance. So, confining ourselves to our particular subject, Turner

gives us a vast amount of information about trees, while he often idealises them, and never makes us feel as if we were among the trees, or looking at them from a less or greater distance. They are painted trees, very beautifully painted trees, in a painted world. Thus Hamerton says of him that "notwithstanding a profound knowledge of the natural world, there was such a strong art-faculty, and such a disposition to refer to preceding art that he was never enslaved to nature. The mere fact that, having the choice of town or country, he could live in London, is in itself sufficient evidence that his mind had never been overwhelmed by nature to the point of sacrificing its human liberty and individuality."

We have an admirable illustration of this rendering of nature in the terms of art in one of Turner's best-known pictures, "Crossing the Brook," in the National Gallery. Turner had been down to Plymouth with Mr. Cyrus Redding. They had observed a view on the river Tamar similar to the one in the picture, of which Turner made little more than a mental note. "Meeting him in London one morning," says Mr. Redding, "he told me that if I would

look in at his gallery I should recognise a scene I well knew, the features of which he had brought from the West. I did so, and traced, except in a part of the front-ground, a spot near Newbridge, on the Tamar, we had visited together." The picture then was painted in London, far away from the scene itself. We feel no sense of reality; it is too conventional in composition, in colour, and in light and shade, to produce such an impression. It is a painted world. Yet how marvellous are the gradations of tone by which, and not merely by diminished size alone, the eye passes through that world from distance to farther distance, until earth and sky mingle in a last uncertainty. Constable would have made us feel as if the scene were before us. Turner reminds us of it; and idealises it as the memory idealises.

The scene is in a well-wooded country. On the high ground to the left are two lofty trees, with long stems, branchless for the greater part of their height, and then branching out and bearing heads of exceedingly graceful foliage. What kind of trees are they? If we were to cut off the lower part of the stems we should probably think of the ash, and then say,

"no, it cannot be". Mr. A. W. Hunt, in *English Art in the Public Galleries*, calls them fir-trees, and says "the facts of an actually existing scene have been a little overmuch bent, like the fir-tree bough on the left, to the painter's will". Apparently the trees are intended to be Scots pines. But the note of the Scots pine is rigidity. These trees, in stem and foliage alike, are sinuously graceful. Turner has tamed the wild tree to bring it into harmony with the luxuriant beauty of the rest of the scene.

Ruskin has no difficulty, in *Modern Painters* and elsewhere, in showing what a vast record of fact there is in Turner's finished and unfinished works. In common phrase, they are a mine of information. An encyclopædia of natural appearances might be made out of them. Ruskin says that his sympathy was absolutely infinite, so all-embracing that he knew nothing but that of Shakespeare comparable with it, and he compares Turner's observation of natural fact with Bacon's work in science. Redgrave—who differs widely from Ruskin in his art criticism—says: "Turner's water-colour paintings, indeed, epitomise the

whole mystery of landscape art. Other painters have arrived at excellence in one treatment of nature. Thus, Cozens in grand and solemn effects of mountain scenery; Robson in simple breadth and masses; De Wint in tone and colour; Glover in sun-gleams thrown across the picture, and tipping with golden light the hills and trees; Cox in his breezy freshness; and Barret in his classical compositions, lighted by the setting sun. These were men that played in one key, often making the rarest melody. But Turner's art compassed all they did collectively, and more than equalled each in his own way."

I have said and quoted so much about Turner's art generally, because such language can be rightly used of the one part of it with which we are immediately concerned. We can learn more about trees from Turner than from any other painter. He idealises; he generalises; as with other painters, it were best at times not to inquire what particular tree is intended. We have already noted a case where he has allowed the general sentiment of a picture to prevail against the requirements of accurate tree-study. But, when all is said, we

are reminded, when amongst the trees, of no other painter so often, and in so many various ways, as of Turner; and his works help us more than those of any other painter to see the beauty and majesty of the woodland.

On an earlier page I have grouped together a number of the chief points of interest that trees have for modern landscape painters. All of them are illustrated over and over again in Turner's works. His feeling for the vital energy of the tree, the trunk and stem and branches carrying a weight of leafage that endangers its stability under the force of gravitation and of the tempest, is constant. He often makes us realise it the more by carrying somewhat too slender stems high into the air, and then, and then only, branching them out; so that the tree seems to be precariously balancing its foliage at a great height from the ground. His trees are inverted pyramids which only living power within them could maintain. The intricacy of their branching, and the infinity of leaves of which their heaviest looking masses are composed; the full expansion of the tree when it grows alone; the contracted or one-sided growth to which

it has to submit when in company with other trees—all these and other general facts of tree-life are recorded time after time.

The pathos of the old age of trees was evidently deeply felt by Turner. Of one instance of this, an aged willow in the *Liber Studiorum* plate, "Hedging and Ditching," the Rev. Stopford Brooke says: "The long past of the willow in which it patiently grew into power, the lifeless ruin it has become, are both recorded in the drawing. The bark has been stripped away, so that we can follow all along the trunk the sinewy strength of its interwoven fibres, the upgrowth of its knotted branches, and the hollowing of their decay. There is not a truer and mightier piece of etching in the whole of this book."

Another *Liber* plate, "Crowhurst, Sussex," may be mentioned for the great variety of its interest. Though the trees are in leaf there has been a fall of snow, and their stems tell dark against the whiteness of the valley-fields and the hill-side. It was a similar effect that recently drew from a friend the remark, which I have already quoted: "How this reminds one of an etching!" In the "Crowhurst"

there is a line of tall trees on a lofty river-bank in the foreground. Some of them seem to be in vigorous life, others are dead or dying. Men are at work among them. Two of the men are resting from the heavy labour of cutting through the stout stem of a fallen tree with a double-handed saw. Any amateur who has tried his hand—or rather his arms and back at this work—will sympathise with them. The small branches of the tree have been tied up into bunches. Farther away lies another large stem, that of a tree which has been felled. A man is lopping off the smaller branches from another portion of it. The upper part of a branch of one of the standing trees is almost broken off, and, hanging down, sways in the wind. The pathos of the dying, dead and felled or fallen trees is echoed by an old woman who is filling her apron with sticks for firewood, the need for which is emphasised by the snow-shower that is whitening the landscape.

Two Scots pines in the *Liber* plate "Inverary Castle," make ample amends for the southern gentleness of manner given to their two brothers in "Crossing the Brook". They have been bent by the force of many a gale

THE SOURCE OF THE ARVERON
From the "Liber Studiorum" of J. M. W. Turner

blowing in from the sea. Not only have their lighter branches and twigs been bent over, but so also have their stems, when not far above the ground.

In the oil-painting "Apollo and the Python," and the *Liber* plate "Jason," the monsters half-hidden among the trees are made more terrible by huge, fallen and riven trunks, and broken branches which bear witness to their terrible, evil power.

"Dragons of the prime" could not have wrought more havoc amid trees than do the avalanches, the fall of rocks, and the fierce storms among the Alps. There the firs and pines have to struggle hard to maintain a bare existence; and here again Turner felt deeply the pathos—the tragic pathos—of the battle for life under such terribly adverse conditions. Here is what Ruskin, writing in *Modern Painters* of the *Liber* plate "Arveron," says about this struggle: "The soil of the pine is subject to continual change; perhaps the rock in which it is rooted splits in frost and falls forward, throwing the young stems aslope, or the whole mass of earth round it is undermined by rain, or a huge boulder falls on its stem

from above, and forces it for twenty years to grow with weight of a couple of tons leaning on its side. Hence, especially at edges of loose cliffs, about waterfalls, or at glacier banks and in other places liable to disturbance, the pine may be seen distorted and oblique, and in Turner's 'Source of the Arveron' he has, with his usual unerring perception of the main point in any matter, fastened on this means of relating the glacier's history. The glacier cannot explain its own motion; and ordinary observers saw in it only its rigidity; but Turner saw that the wonderful thing was its non-rigidity. Other ice is fixed, only this ice stirs. All the banks are staggering beneath its waves, crumbling and withered as by the blast of a perpetual storm. He made the rocks of his foreground loose—rolling and tottering down together; the pines smitten aside by them, their tops dead, bared by the ice-wind."

Turner's art was intensely dramatic. Those who have not studied his work from such a point of view would be surprised to find how much there is in it of the drama of human life, both collective and individual. And so it was with regard to nature. He was not a mere

landscape painter going about in search of the picturesque, the beautiful or the grand; he realised what he saw around him as merely the momentary condition of things that are constantly changing. Ruskin says that he painted rocks and mountains with geological truthfulness, not because he understood geology, but because he observed and recorded faithfully. But he did more than this, as is shown by the passage just quoted from Ruskin. His rendering of the mountains and the rocks brings home to us, with startling force, the truth that geology is not the science of past changes only, but of present changes. The forces that have made the world what it now is are still at work, and will continue to work, and will slowly but surely make the world very different from what it is now. The dynamic power of the lightning, the hail, snow and ice, the glacier, the waterfall, the torrent, the sea, in changing the face of the world, is set forth even in Turner's most delicate water-colour drawings. And so it is with his trees. I might have given to them a separate chapter, with some such heading as "The Life-History of Trees, their Joys and their Sorrows". Nature is not a mere

pastoral. Everything in the country is not idyllic. You may see young trees; you may see trees in the splendour of full maturity; but you see also trees that are passing to decay, one part still full of leaf in summer, and, in winter, giving evidence of life in its multitude of budded twigs; but another part of the same tree will be but a gaunt, bare fork, and, finally, there is the inevitable end. This is how Turner saw the trees; his record is one of life and death.

He did not, like Constable, confine himself to any particular part of the year. Constable revolted against brown, and contented himself with green. Turner revelled in colour, and rejoiced in the wealth of it that autumn spread before him, like a merchant displaying gorgeous eastern fabrics. The colour he has given to autumn foliage, purple and crimson and scarlet and gold, is not the least of his many offences in the eyes of those who have either never observed nature in her most brilliant moments, or will not accept the rhetorical statements of exalted enthusiasm.

Turner may also be said, as far as such a thing can be said, to have exhausted the full range of effects of light upon and through trees,

from deepest gloom, through luminous shadow and tranquil shade to the blinding brilliance that seems to burn up the smaller branches, and to fuse even the stalwart stem. How tenderly beautiful is the misty, morning sunlight in the "Abingdon" in the National Gallery! How joyously the clear sunshine breaks through the trees near the castle in the "Colchester" drawing, and then disports itself upon the grassy slope beneath them! What bewildering interplay of sunbeam and shade, what dazzling brilliance of points of light reflected from innumerable leaves, there are in the "Aesacus and Hesperie" of the *Liber Studiorum!* And how solemn are the shades, intensified, not dispersed, by the light of the waning moon and the growing dawn, and of the torch held by Rizpah, where she watches among the bones of her children!

Perhaps it need hardly be said that we must not go to Turner's pictures expecting that his representations of trees will serve the purpose of botanical illustrations. They tell us a great deal about trees, but they are not a pictorial form of instruction in science. Many of us are quite familiar with the various kinds of trees

that have been briefly described in an earlier chapter; but, if we came to study them botanically, we should be surprised to find how much there was to be learned about them beyond the knowledge that has put us, shall I say, on a friendly footing with them. Ruskin, in *Modern Painters*, can bring in botanical science to show how much more truth there is in Turner's trees than in those of other painters. But an uncompromising application of science would show that Turner never told the whole truth, nor, frequently, nothing but the truth.

We can agree that the artist, like the ordinary unscientific lover of trees, is not to be looked to for minute descriptiveness. But what are we to say when Turner becomes vague almost to untruthfulness? This, perhaps that art has its own ends to serve, and is entitled to subordinate nature to those ends. Ruskin takes the rendering of the bank of the river Wharfe in one of Turner's Bolton Abbey drawings to exemplify his fidelity to nature. In the small water-colour vignette, done to be engraved as an illustration to Rogers's poem, "The Boy of Egremond," the abbey itself is summarily drawn, the trees are not like those that actually

do grow between the abbey and the river; they are such as never grew anywhere. The river-bank does not in the least resemble the bank of the Wharfe at the spot; nor are the hills like those that actually rise above it. The colour of the drawing, also, is quite conventional. I am reminded of a story of Millais' painting "Chill October". A man who was watching him said, "Mon, did ye never try photography?" "No, never," replied Millais. "But it's a hantle quicker," was the rejoinder. "Yes, so I believe," said Millais. "Ay, and it's mair like the place!" was the final assertion—unanswerable to such a man—of the superior merit of photography as compared with painting.

I will not enter here into any defence of the proposition that art has the right to take liberties with nature. At least, I will merely say that, in the case of the particular drawing of Turner's just mentioned, I believe that neither a photograph, nor a literally accurate drawing, would have served so well as an illustration to a poem telling a story of long ago which might, perhaps, be legendary. I have only written so much about the limits of Turner's accuracy to prevent

the reader from going to him expecting more than he has to give, while finding also much that is at first perplexing, and, as a result, perhaps, not learning how much he gives that is invaluable. Again and again one finds that this is what happens. Even Ruskin had to admit how much what was conventional in Turner's art had interfered with appreciation of what was true in it.

It might seem that nothing need be said about the tree-painting of the minor contemporaries of Constable and Turner, that what has been said about the work of these two would suffice. Or, at least: that the work of the others might have been discussed first, and thus we should have come to these two as to a climax. But it is not always an anti-climax to listen to the talk of simple people after hearing the disquisitions of the learned; and, similarly, I have often found it delightful to pass from Turner's stimulating, not to say exciting, art to the simple, restful drawings of Cox and De Wint. To these we are coming shortly, but will do so by way of a painter who may be said to stand part way between these two artists and Turner —John Sell Cotman, who was born at Norwich

in 1782, and was a friend of John Crome and his companions of the Norwich School, though his art covered a wider range than theirs.

It has been said, and I think justly, that Cotman must not be looked upon merely as a lesser Turner. Certainly it would not be right to place him as high as Turner; but on one side of landscape painting he comes near at least to equality. Turner's art was mainly epic. This we have seen. It is the epic, the dramatic quality in Turner's rendering of trees that I have been trying to bring out. It is not without significance that the frontispiece—the one illustration—to Mr. Frazer's book, *The Golden Bough*, in which the strange epic of tree-worship is closely studied, is a reproduction of an oil-painting by Turner, bearing the same name as the book, and being a view of Lake Nemi, almost encircled by the woods from which comes out a nymph with the bough in her hand.

Landscape painting is usually lyrical, and Cotman takes his place in the very forefront of the painters who reflect the passing mood of the landscape in which they find themselves, be it grave or gay, without reflection upon the

mighty and enduring forces of which it is but the momentary expression. In this he is like Constable, Crome, Cox, De Wint, and the great majority of landscape painters. In what way does he come nearer than they to Turner, so that it can be said, as I have said with reference to Cox and De Wint, that he comes part way between Turner and them? It is in his power of imaginative design. We might say that whereas the others paint nature, Cotman paints Nature. The capital letter mades all the difference. It suggests a unity, that what we see around us may be to us "a mighty maze" but that it is "not without a plan". Mr. Laurence Binyon has well said of him: "He is not at all concerned to imitate the actuality of nature. As we have seen, he will endow things with unknown shapes and colours, if by so doing he can subdue them the better to his mood. He is for ever seeking a rhythm, a controlling idea behind the waste and abundance of nature; and what he creates, when his effort is victorious, coheres into reality with a force and persuasion of its own."

We are perpetually being brought face to face with the problem of the relation of art to

nature, and it is here before us again. May I, making a by no means original attempt at a solution of the difficulty, point out that Nature —we will use the capital letter—does not plant trees so as to provide us with ready-made pictures? She does not plant trees at all chiefly with a view to the way in which they will affect the mind and spirit of the human spectator of them. She plants them in accordance with the great purposes—if the word may be used—of the evolution of tree-life. Man sometimes plants trees with a view to the picturesque; and he will cut down trees with the same end in view. The result, therefore, is partly nature and partly art. I have already ventured to say that man has made both the town and the country out of materials provided by nature. Is it permissible thus to alter the facts, and must the artist be limited in his work to a mere transcript of facts? The demand is an unreasonable one. It is also a foolish one. It is a superstitious self-denying ordinance. We might as well condemn ourselves to sit on stones because Nature has not made chairs. There are Eastern ascetics who do sit on one stone for years together. It is better to sit on

chairs, and *on* one kind of chair for dinner, and *in* another kind of chair for a nap after dinner!

So an artist finds that a chance relation to each other, from some point where he happens to be standing, of—perhaps—a stream, rocks, trees and a distant hill, under some particular condition of lighting is more beautiful in form and colour, or more impressive in light and shade, than from any other standpoint. This is accidental. Nature has not arranged all these things for this purpose. The artist sees, or feels, that had Nature's chief aim with regard to these things been their pictorial effect from this point of view, she could have made them even more effective. So by additions and omissions he makes his picture more effective, truer to the central impression the scene has made upon him, than it would be were he merely to make as nearly a literal transcript of the scene as the means at his disposal would permit. This, in the realm of æsthetics, is the counterpart of preferring a chair to a stone in the realm of physical utilities. And this is the way in which Cotman, like all true artists, made use of nature for the purposes of art.

But if this is what all true artists do, how did his work differ from that of such men as Cox and De Wint? I seize here on one particular of difference, in saying that his work is designed, theirs is composed. They give the impression of having made the line and mass and colour in an actual scene more agreeable to the eye than it was in nature by means of certain conventional arrangements of them which we feel as a partial modification of the scene. In Cotman's work there is a change that affects every dot and line and lighter or darker patch in the picture. A sense of rhythm, of visible music, binds everything in it into a harmonious whole. The other men seem to have found in nature a suggestion of harmony, upon which they have improved, without making it perfect. Cotman seems with inevitable instinct to have completely transposed the fact into music. If we turn his drawings upside down, and so lose much of the sense of representation of trees, or stream, or whatever else may be the actual things depicted, the rhythmic play of line and mass only becomes the more obvious. Yet it is so done, in his best work, that the art does

not obtrude itself. It looks as if he had chanced upon a scene where nature had tried her hand at picture-making. We do not feel far from nature, as we not unseldom do in Turner's work. In Cotman's later work he so forced the contrast of warm and cool colour, purple and blue in one part of the picture, and glowing yellows in the other part, that we quite lose touch with nature; but this was not so with his earlier work.

We are concerned here with what he has to tell us about the trees; or, rather, what he has to show us of them, and the showing—even in his black-and-white drawings—is most instructively delightful. We see trees in great shady masses, with stem and branches showing here and there to tell us how the masses are borne in the air; and through openings between them, a distant river-valley with the stream and a glimpse of bright sky emphasising the shadiness of the trees. Shadow, shade, and glittering or gleaming light alternate amid foliage that never fails to suggest that the densest masses of it are made up of an assemblage of small individuals, moving in groups only, and each member of a group with a

BREAKING THE CLOD

By J. S. Cotman. From a drawing in the British Museum

capricious waywardness of its own; and yet that even the waywardness is under control. Stems and branches that gleam in the sunlight are opposed to masses of shade behind them in a way that brings out their structure with startling vividness. At other times we have simply masses of foliage, too dense for stem and branch to be seen, yet we feel that we could push our way through them. The sense of design does not reduce wild nature to bondage, and the various kinds of trees retain their individuality and habits of growth.

Cotman had a truer feeling than Turner for the character of the Scots pine, and contrasts the towering self-reliant look of it with the gracefulness of the silver birch, which, however, as we have seen, possesses an endurance that its appearance does not suggest. His oak-trees have enormous strength of bole, and sturdiness of tortuous bough; and the deeply indented character of the leaves is suggested in the edges and interior markings of the leaf-masses. The gracefulness of the ash, the rounded masses of beech and elm, the many branchings and the narrow, pointed leafage of the willow, are all sympathetically rendered.

His woodland-glades, through which the timid deer wander, are so true in lovingly recorded detail that we seem to be ourselves wandering through them, enjoying their alternations of light and shade, and wondering what delightful view there will be if we climb to the top of a bank, or what new vista along the woodland-aisles we shall get when we have passed through the narrow opening before us; and always, we are admiring, I may put it, the strength and grace of the woodland-architecture and the varied beauty of its leafy adornment—or, if so be that it is a winter-scene, it is then as if we were in some roofless choir, beautiful though bare. It is notable also that Cotman, who renders with such rare truth and sympathy the mingled strength and delicacy of tree-structure, shows no less appreciation of the same qualities in Gothic architecture and no less skill in their portrayal. A drawing of a Norman arch in Norwich Cathedral, filled with a screen of late Gothic mullions and tracery, is like the strength of the oak mingled with the grace of the ash. In this also he resembled Turner.

The woods, as Cotman drew and painted

them, are natural. Man and horse and plough and cart seem quite at home in their unfenced roads or their neighbouring fields. Yet the design that is never absent from the artist's rendering of them gives them an idyllic appearance which suggests that when mere man and his implements have left them, the dryads may come out from their hiding-places; and it is quite without surprise that in one drawing, where we are taken into a mountain-gorge, through which tumultuous torrents leap and roar, we and the trees are the only spectators of a fierce contest between a centaur and a giant. Here, for once, Cotman gets on to Turner's ground; he feels and personifies the vast powers of nature; a vision of the ages opens out before us; but for the most part it is the beauty of our own day that we see, without reflection on what has gone before or what shall come after.

The tree-drawing of David Cox and De Wint is much broader than that of Cotman, and has no such loving subtlety of interpretation. Trees for them are incidental to landscape; they never seem to take trees, either singly, in groups, or in masses, as the main

subject of a picture. The appearance of nature under varying conditions of atmosphere and light was Cox's main subject, and his rendering of form went no further than was necessary for the realisation of atmospheric effect. "He seems more intent," says Redgrave, "upon obtaining the exact tone and colour of nature, than in defining *form*; which is gradually developed in his pictures by the juxtaposition of hues and tints rather than by drawing." Of Cox's foliage Ruskin says: "It is altogether exquisite in colour, and in its impressions of coolness, shade and mass; of its drawing I cannot say anything, but that I should be sorry to see it better". Ruskin recognises here that work must have the defects of its qualities, though he does not always seem to do so.

Interesting himself chiefly in the variations of light on broad masses, Cox limits himself almost entirely to such trees as the oak and the beech and the elm. Occasionally one of the lighter, more graceful trees, ash or birch, is used as a foil to the heavy masses; but often it would be difficult to identify, in either type, the particular tree intended. If

CHIRK VIADUCT, VALE OF LLANGOLLEN
From the Water Colour Drawing by David Cox, in the British Museum

he defines a tree more closely than usual it is generally when, near the foreground, in the conventional place at the side of the picture, it is used as a contrast to a wide stretch of country, in which, if it be valley or lowland plain, he loves to show a very sea of forest-trees, their full, rounded forms now in light and now in shadow.

De Wint uses trees in much the same way as Cox. Sometimes his treatment of them is even more summary; there is hardly even a suggestion of leafiness; at other times his rendering is much more subtle than that of Cox; but he rarely, if ever, paints them as if he valued them otherwise than for their effectiveness in the general landscape. I have referred above to Cotman's fine architectural draughtsmanship. Cox never interests himself in the refinements of Gothic detail, though he shows himself sensitive to the play of light on the walls and roofs of picturesque buildings. De Wint will wander round Gloucester and Lincoln, and paint their cathedral towers, evidently with some feeling for the beauty of panelling and tracery, of battlemented parapet and crowning pinnacles. But he could not

enter into the spirit of Gothic architecture as could Turner, and in hardly a less degree, Cotman; nor, although he is more attentive to the architecture of trees than is Cox, does he ever make us feel that the strenuous life of the individual tree, and the characteristics of its growth, had any particular interest for him. We may say, as Ruskin said about Cox's tree-drawing, that we should be sorry to have De Wint's trees other than they are. We should not then get his broad harmonies of rich colour, and his exhilarating prospects over vast reaches of country in which the trees, collectively, count for so much.

It is no part of my purpose to attempt to show, even briefly, how all of even the principal English landscape painters have interpreted tree-life. If we went conscientiously through a list of the men of the early and middle periods of English art, we should find ourselves going over much the same ground as that over which a few of our greatest painters have already taken us. We should link W. J. Müller with Constable, find resemblances between Patrick and Alexander Nasmyth and the Norwich School, and so

A WOODY LANDSCAPE
From the oil painting by Peter De Wint in the South Kensington Museum

forth; but we should hardly get deeper into the subject of trees in art. We can hardly make an exception in the case of the Linnells, whom we should place in the company of the general admirers of trees. It is dangerous to make exceptions, but the landscapes of Samuel Palmer and George Mason, romantic in different ways, and in which trees are individually interpreted, cannot be passed without mention. Palmer delighted in the luxuriant trees of fertile country. Mason showed a marked affection for the dwarfed, straggling trees that grow by the edge of commons and on the stony uplands. I hesitate to let this brief reference to one or two artists stand. But it shall do so. It will serve to suggest how much more there is to be studied than we can study here.

The Pre-Raphaelitism of Holman Hunt and Millais was a new departure in many ways. As "a return to nature" it involved an extremely realistic treatment of landscape, and of all forms of vegetation that had to be introduced into a picture. Trees were represented with as close an approximation to botanical accuracy as the patient copying of

them, day after day, could ensure. Here is a description, by his brother, of one of Millais' early works of this kind: "I think, perhaps, the most beautiful background ever painted by my brother is to be found in his picture of 'The Woodman's Daughter'—a copse of young oaks standing in a tangle of bracken and untrodden underwood, every plant graceful in its virgin splendour. Notice the exquisitely tender greys in the bark of the young oak in the foreground, against which the brilliantly clothed lordling is leaning. Every touch in the fretwork tracery all about it has been caressed by a true lover of his art, for in these, his glorious early days, one can see that not an iota was slurred over, but that every beauty in nature met with its due appreciation at his hands. Eye cannot follow the mysterious interlacing of all the wonderful green things that spring up all about, where every kind of wood-growth seems to be striving to get the upper hand and to reach the sunlight first, where every leaf and tendril stands out in bold relief." This is characteristic of all Millais' landscape painting in the days of his Pre-Raphaelite fervour.

THE HIRELING SHEPHERD
By W. Holman Hunt

It was thus, also, that Holman Hunt painted the landscape and trees in his "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "The Hireling Shepherd," "The Strayed Sheep," and the "Light of the World". His account of the painting of the moonlit orchard in the last-named picture is as follows: "It was late in the autumn, but I had matured my preparations for 'The Light of the World' enough to work in the old orchard before the leaves and fruit had altogether disappeared. To paint the picture life-size, as I should have desired, would have forbidden any hope of sale. For my protection from the cold, as far as it could be found, I had a little sentry-box built of hurdles, and I sat with my feet in a sack of straw. A lamp, which I at first tried, proved to be too strong and blinding to allow me to distinguish the subtleties of hue of the moonlit scene, and I had to be satisfied with the illumination from a common candle. I went out to my work about 9 P.M., and remained until 5 A.M. the next morning, when I retired into the house to bed till about ten, and then rose to go back to my hut and devote myself for an hour or two to the rectifying of any errors of colour, and to

drawing out the work for the ensuing night." With such painstaking endeavour as this of Holman Hunt and Millais to get the truth and the whole truth of natural facts we now make acquaintance for the first time.

Are we not here again brought up against the problem of the relation of art to nature? Yes, but we are not concerned, for the purpose of this book, to argue for or against the legitimacy, as art, of the intensely realistic methods of the Pre-Raphaelites. We have only to find what help, if any, they have procured for us in our study of tree-life. It matters not to us if Holman Hunt and Millais mistook, and led others to mistake, the imitation of nature for art, so long as we find, after looking at their paintings, that they prove once more the truth of Browning's

> We're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted, things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
> And so they are better painted—better to us,
> Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
> God uses us to help each other so,
> Lending our minds out.

Art has been given for other ends besides this; but we will not despise art that serves

this one. Even M. de la Sizeranne, in whose judgment the Pre-Raphaelite movement contained much artistic heresy, can say: "Perhaps the Pre-Raphaelites may not have gained the battle they fought, but they gained another. Perhaps they may not have proved that nature is the final expression of art, but they have proved that it is the foundation of it, and that the efforts of a Pleiad of men of talent and resolution are never lost, whatever may have been their object."

Redgrave, in whose judgment the principles of the Pre-Raphaelites were heretical—by omission at least—says: "We are also willing to admit that the principles themselves have a great value, if not observed to the exclusion of others, in enforcing constant reference to nature and greater imitative truth". There is much dispute, however, as to the extent to which the Pre-Raphaelite paintings are true to nature, true to nature, that is, as the human eye sees it. Even this point we need not discuss. The green shadows that Holman Hunt paints along the green grass in "The Strayed Sheep" may, as some say, be true to fact, but not to the fact as it appears to the human eye taking in the

whole scene at once. What interests us in the picture is the tangle of wild shrubs, after seeing which we can never again look with indifference at such a tangle in nature.

So with the willow-trees in Holman Hunt's "The Hireling Shepherd" and Millais' "Ophelia"; so, also, with the Lombardy poplars in Millais' "Autumn Leaves" and "The Vale of Rest," and with the bole of the ancient oak in his "The Proscribed Royalist"—to take only a few examples. If we had never looked closely at the beautiful texture, colour and form of common vegetation, we could hardly fail to do so ever after, if once we had carefully looked at the marvellous painting of detail in such pictures as these. No previous painters had done such work as this. With regard to many of them the doubt would be, as we have already seen, whether we could identify, as being meant for any particular kinds of trees, those that appeared in their pictures. Holman Hunt and Millais, and the imitators of their closely realistic painting, have not only represented trees so that they are at once recognisable by those who are familiar with their general appearance, they have quickened our observation and

THE PROSCRIBED ROYALIST
By Sir J. E. Millais, P.R.A.

taught us to see in the infinitely intricate detail of nature, beauty that otherwise we might have passed by unnoticed.

Such pictures as Holman Hunt's "The Hireling Shepherd" and "Strayed Sheep" are in art what the descriptions of Richard Jefferies are in literature. It is not the broad effect of the landscape that has been portrayed, but the detail of plant, tree, insect, bird and animal life, in all its variety of form and colour. In the immediate foreground of the former picture we can almost count the blades of grass. The mallow, the marigold, the poppy, the convolvulus are painted with close literalness. The nearest willow is a botanical study; those farther away hardly less so. The peep through the trees, beyond the corn-field, into another field, is delightful; even though, as many a critic would say, it is what no one would ever see who was occupied with the main subject of the picture. Compare this detail with the following description in Richard Jefferies' *Notes on Landscape Painting:* "Among the meadows the buttercups in spring are as innumerable as ever and as pleasant to look upon. The petal of the

buttercup has an enamel of gold; with the nail you may scrape it off, leaving still a yellow ground, but not reflecting the sunlight like the outer layer. From the centre the golden pollen covers the finger with dust like that from the wing of a butterfly. In the bunches of grass and by the gateways the germander speedwell looks like tiny specks of blue stolen, like Prometheus' fire, from the summer sky. When the mowing-grass is ripe the heads of sorrel are so thick and close that at a little distance the surface seems as if sunset were always shining red upon it." This is about half of a passage of description which ends: "Hedges, thick and high, and full of flowers, birds and living creatures, of shade and flecks of sunshine dancing up and down the barks of the trees—I love their very thorns. You do not know how much there is in the hedges."

How thoroughly Pre-Raphaelite this is! We can match it in a poem already quoted for another purpose, Tennyson's "Mariana":—

> With blackest moss the flower-plots
> Were thickly crusted, one and all:
> The rusted nails fell from the knots
> That held the pear to the gabled wall.

The broken sheds look'd sad and strange :
Unlifted was the clinking latch ;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.

Why this minute detail? Because the poet could by means of it make us realise the weariness of the woman who had looked out upon the scene from her windows so often and so long that all these details had been forced upon her notice and had become, each one, an element in the monotony of her existence. The detail given by Holman Hunt and Millais, and by Jefferies in his essays, serves the exactly opposite purpose: to intensify our pleasure in the beauty of nature, that is to say, of course, if we are not unhappy, like the lady of the moated grange. Mr. Byam Shaw has painted a picture of a woman, in mourning, walking by a stream-side, and the trees and flowers and herbage are painted with Pre-Raphaelite literalness. She has been bereaved by war ; and now the world looks less beautiful to her than it did before her loss. She has known each object about her, and now they are all less bright, less gladsome than they were. But how beautiful they were,

how joyously beautiful when her heart was glad!

These revulsions of feeling come to all of us. The things we know best give us the keenest pleasure and the acutest pain. We cannot have the one if we will not risk the other. In an earlier chapter I have spoken of the pang that follows the thought that the time must come when I shall be no more among the trees I have grown individually to love. I never read or say to myself the verses of Tennyson's "A Farewell" without recalling a day when I heard them spoken by a friend of whom they are now true. I have already quoted one of the verses. This is the last one :—

> A thousand suns will stream on thee,
> A thousand moons will quiver;
> But not by thee my steps will be,
> For ever and for ever.

Art, then, does more for us than merely to deepen our sense of natural beauty when it paints the trees of the garden and the woodland with loving insistence on detail.

Holman Hunt painted only a few landscapes; and in those of his pictures in which

there is the most careful study of trees, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" and "The Hireling Shepherd," the landscape is only a background for figures. Millais, on the other hand, painted many landscapes, in which trees were a prominent feature; and even in his later work, after he had renounced the minute detail of his Pre-Raphaelite days, his tree-painting bore the impress of a personal affection for individual trees. One cannot look at them without feeling this; and if we turn to his son's biography of him we shall find that such affection was really characteristic of the man. "Though himself no gardener," says the biographer, "he was, as might be expected of the painter of 'Ophelia,' fond of everything that grew and flowered. Of a solitary bed of lilies of the valley which raised their heads amidst the London smuts in our back courtyard he was inordinately proud; and a vine that climbed over the back of the house, and in summer led its dainty tendrils through the open windows, he came to regard with almost the scientific interest of such horticulturists as Pope and Shenstone. Apropos of his love for Kensington Gardens, Miss Jameson, my mother's

cousin, favours me with a pathetic reminiscence. She says: 'The last walk I ever took with him was about a fortnight before he was finally restricted to the house. It was late in the afternoon of a spring day, the sun shining brightly and a cold East wind. He told me he would take and show me something beautiful. We went into the Gardens to a spot where there was a magnificent magnolia in full blossom. This was what he wished to show. He could not speak above a whisper, but pointed constantly with his stick to those flowers and the different spring blossoms that he loved so well, making his usual remark of the delight it was to have such gardens so near at hand to walk in. I always associate them with him now.'"

The following passage from the biography is also of great interest with respect to our immediate subject: "Says a well-known author, 'There is nothing good or God-like in this world but has in it something of infinite sadness'. Without necessarily endorsing this sentiment, I may fairly point to 'The Old Garden' as a presentment of the pathos of Nature under the garb of a homely landscape

—a picture always associated in my mind with Fred Walker's masterpiece, 'The Harbour of Refuge'. The garden is that of the old castle at Murthly, then inhabited by Sir Douglas Stewart; and near at hand is the park where 'Christmas Eve' was painted. To emphasise the tone of sadness he sought to convey, Millais at first painted in the figure of a widow (and I think also a child) wandering amidst the scenes of bygone happiness; but as he could not get the figures to his satisfaction, he wisely painted them out. Another difficulty was how to break the broad expanse of the terrace in the immediate foreground, and this he got over by introducing part of a beautiful old fountain which he discovered in another corner of the garden. This is the only feature which is not in the scene as it actually exists to-day."

Millais' landscapes are so familiar to everyone, either in the original or in reproductions, that it is worth while further to emphasise this affection for trees; and I will take as another instance one of the finest of his pictures, painted in his strictly Pre-Raphaelite days, "Autumn Leaves". I have already mentioned the Lom-

bardy poplars which, in this picture, stand out so solemnly against the twilight sky. The picture, however, owes its title to the marvellously painted heap of fallen leaves, each one carefully individualised and faithfully depicted, which the children are piling up for burning. The scene is a garden with which Millais was familiar, and the children are portraits. The reader will recollect that he has been asked to find the pathos of autumn, not in the trees—which have actively rid themselves of the leaves for which they have no further use, while they have next year's leaves already in bud—but in the fallen leaves themselves. I may be permitted to quote what I have said elsewhere about this picture, in a handbook to the pictures in the Manchester City Art Gallery, where it has found a permanent home. "It has been said of this picture by one critic that its significance lies 'in the contrast of the unpoetical girls with the deeply pathetic landscape'. But are the girls unpoetical? Assuredly the eldest one is not. If we read that face aright, those wistful eyes and that drooping mouth, we see that the power of love has come to her, and also some sense of the great paradox of life: that

death, which love dreads so much, is, none the less, for us mortals, the condition without which love cannot be. The joy and love of nature's spring-time are gone. We are also near the ending of another day. But these children are only in the dawn and spring-time of their life. Yet already one of them forecasts the autumn of life. She is distraught; as one would cast incense on an altar she adds to the heap of fallen leaves—an acceptance of autumn for the sake of spring, of death for the sake of love. And her depth of feeling is emphasised by the want of it in the younger children. Look at her sister, the mischievous little minx who holds the basket; she looks straight at you, her mouth by no means drooping, and her eyes by no means distraught:—

> A simple child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death?

And by way of further contrast is the difference between the two children of the house—the ones already referred to—and the gardener's children; the former rightly, not forwardly, self-

confident, ready to return your greeting with frank look and handshake; the latter ready to return your greeting only with downcast eyes and humble curtsey. Perhaps then the significance of this picture does not lie in 'the contrast of the unpoetical girls with the deeply pathetic landscape'."

Few are the British trees that have not been painted by Millais with affectionate delineation of their individual features. He has often been accused of seeking after popularity; and his best friends have found it difficult to defend him from the charge. But his love of trees and flowers, if nothing else, might well earn for him the forgiveness of a multitude of sins; for it was natural, deep and, as we have seen, a master-passion with him to the very end of his days. How much do not many of us owe to him for having helped us to know and love the trees more intimately! Often I go out in the twilight to look at the tall poplars dark against the luminous sky. "Autumn Leaves" and "The Vale of Rest" first sent me on this quest. The distant fir-trees in "Murthly Moss" often come to mind when I see trees across a foreground of heath. Can one ever see a beech-

bole with indifference, after looking at the magnificent one against which the weary wanderers are resting in "Rosalind and Celia"? And who that has seen the "Ophelia" ever sees a willow athwart a stream without quickened observation and feeling? So one might go on, through picture after picture, ever remembering that Millais painted trees not merely because of their beauty or their strength, but because they were living things, and that his feeling of kinship with them filled him with kindness to them.

At the beginning of this chapter I ruled out, as being beyond the limits of available space, all reference to the work of foreign painters among the trees. But a brief note about the work of some of the French impressionist painters should, perhaps, be made; and it will serve as an occasion for drawing attention to certain incidents of tree-life and appearance not hitherto mentioned, the many changes, that is, through which they daily pass. In some ways they share these changes with all other objects upon which the light and the darkness fall, but not in all respects; and such a book as this would hardly be complete without mention of them, even if

they had not been seized upon and lovingly portrayed by the artist.

These changes of the trees are in appearance only, except occasionally, when a tree that has lost but few leaves will, in a sudden gale, be swept nearly clear of them between morning and evening. Trees change their appearance, often many times, during a single hour. Perhaps I was wrong in saying that such changes are in appearance alone. I was standing once at the window of a house that commands a wide view over wood and lake, and range beyond range of hills. "I never tire of looking out over those hills," said the occupant of the house, "*they are always thinking.*" The speaker was a Celt. The Saxon may smile. But, in the sense in which the words were used, not the hills only, but any landscape, and the trees also, are always thinking. Even on the most monotonous or monotonously grey days, the monotony, the oneness of tone is never absolute and unchanging. Especially *is* this so in the morning and the evening. You look out—there is one effect. Five minutes later you look out again—the effect is *quite* different. Increase or decrease of mere grey

light affects different objects differently, their relative effects on the sight are altered. You look out in the early morning. All is grey, the trees seem as if they were asleep. There is an increase of light near the horizon. Differences at once assert themselves. These are the beginnings of shade and shadow. The trees seem to be awakening. They are beginning to think. In the evening, distant trees that were quite clear a few minutes before grow dim in the waning light. The nearer trees have become darker. The water in the pond, that we had hardly seen before, now gleams out from the darkness beneath the trees. For a time there is a concentration of light against dark; then they begin to merge into one another. Night is coming. The world is going to sleep.

When the sky is clear, and much more when there is alternate sun and cloud, the changes are endless in their variety. From morning to night is one long light and colour symphony. To suggest, in pigments that cannot change—alas, how often in another sense pigments do change!—the unceasing changefulness of the natural scene, is one of the triumphs of the painter's art. Some painters hardly attempt it.

The late Walter Severn once told me—it was at Coniston, on the day of Ruskin's funeral—that Ruskin, watching him when he was painting a sky, through which clouds were rapidly passing, said to him: "Severn, you try to do too much. You cannot paint moving things. I never do. I never paint anything that can move. I get quite nervous, fearing it may move off!" Perhaps to realise fully the momentary changefulness of landscape one must have tried to give some impression of it. At least, the attempt to do so, even if the result has been failure, enormously increases one's consciousness of it, and enjoyment of its beauty.

It would be idle to begin to describe such variations. In every season of the year, the changefulness is inexhaustible in interest. Few people, perhaps, do not feel this with respect to the sea; at which, many are content to sit and look for hours. The never-ceasing movement of the waves, the changing light and shade, the gleam and glitter of the reflections, the varying effects of transparency; all this is of fascinating interest. Fewer people get as keen enjoyment from the changefulness of land-

scape; but there are assuredly many, other than those who have set themselves the task of depicting it, who are often tempted to spend more time than they ought to do in the mere sensuous enjoyment of its beauty. Our landscape painters have painted largely in vain if this be not so.

This all applies, of course, to trees, and to individual trees, not merely to groups or masses of them in the nearer or farther distance. What a marvellous change there is when the sun breaks out, and every colour is heightened, and the shade becomes almost black by contrast, and shadows are cast on the ground beneath—and, also, and with what beautiful effect, on the stems of the trees! We have concerts for the people at popular prices. We have music in parks paid for out of the rates. I have no wish to make vain comparison between art and nature; but assuredly we do not all adequately realise what exquisite music is part of our birthright in this world, alienable only by our own neglect or folly.

I *was* wrong in saying that the many changes of the trees were in appearance only. They are often actual changes of mood. We easily

recognise this with regard to the flowers. Is there not a flower-clock? We can tell the time of the day by their opening and closing. And the trees are also sensitive to changes of light and to heat and cold. How limply, for example, hang the leaves of laurel and rhododendron in severe frost. And though the greater part of the changes we see as the minutes and hours go by, may be in appearance only, we are right in feeling that the unconscious life of the trees is affected by them, that they are enlivened by the brightness, refreshed by the rain, and grow quiet in the fading light. When the poets write thus of them, it is not mere idle fancy.

The changefulness is not confined to daytime only. He does not know the trees fully who has not been much with them in the night-time. The town now allows no hard and fast distinction to be drawn between day and night. When it is not day it is still not dark. In the true country, where no electric, gas, nor oil-lamp has come to light the roads, we know what darkness is. Living on the outskirts of a village, where a proposal that there should be oil-lamps was negatived on the

strength of the argument, "Them as wants leets, let 'em carry leets," we often have to find our way by the light of the moon, or the stars, or perhaps only by the forms of well-known trees rising in shadowy ghostliness above the roadside.

We do at times see the trees by artificial light. The night is unusually dark, or something has been left outside, or a gate has been left unfastened, and we have to go out with a lantern. Then we see the curious, because unwonted spectacle of light shining up into the trees, instead of shining down through them and upon them. They are light now against the dark, instead of dark against the light. Their more remote branches die away into the dark, with the appearance of rooting themselves in a solid firmament. Similar, but more weird effects are seen in driving along the country roads at night. The trees start out of the darkness as the lamplight catches them; they seem to look at us, to reach out long, sinewy arms towards us; but we hurry past them, and always escape.

Oftenest we see the trees at night only with the help of nature's lighting. How dim and

vast and strange they look on the darkest, cloudy nights! We can hardly trace their boundaries. It is under the moonlight that their night-effect is most beautiful. We see the light through the nearer trees, and they are darkly silhouetted against it. On the more distant ones the light falls as a silver sheen; if the moonlight be broken by passing clouds, the light seems to shower upon the trees. The clear nights have their own beauty, so have the misty ones. On the clear nights the contrasts of light and dark are more vigorous; on misty nights they are soft, and light and dark pass insensibly into one another. Thus, by night as well as by day, the trees are, if we will let them be, companionable, sociable. As people say about their horses and their dogs, "They do everything but speak".

Such effects as I have been noting were likely to attract the attention of the impressionist painter, of the painter who delights himself largely in the changing appearance of objects under varying atmospheric conditions. It has been said that the impressionists have painted atmosphere and little else, and that this is not much. What I have just been say-

ing is enough, perhaps, to show that this is a too narrow point of view, determined by preoccupation with other ends of art. Atmospheric changes have much, if not most, to do with what we call the moods of nature, which often *are*, indeed, moods of nature, and are of no less importance to us if they be only reflections of our own moods; and the French impressionist landscape painters have given an individual and intense interpretation of these moods, and have taught some of our younger painters to see and feel and paint as they have done.

When changes of light and colour become the real subject of a picture, it is evident that one scene may serve for a whole series of pictures. Thus Claude Monet made two haystacks in a neighbour's field the subject of no fewer than twenty paintings; and a line of poplars along the river Epte at Giverny served him for another series. The reader will recollect that Evelyn, journeying along the river Po, noted the poplars on its banks; but he did not watch them through the changing hours of the day as Monet watched the poplars by the side of his French river. Monet watched

his trees, and shows them to us, in the dim, uncertain light of early morning, in all the brightness of the full sunlight when the mists have cleared away, in the stillness of the noon-day heat, in the glow of evening, in the deep solemnity of the twilight. Richard Jefferies once excused himself for regularly taking the same walk by saying that though always the same it was never the same. I do not know of any series of pictures in a public gallery representing the varied appearance of one scene; but, certainly, every public collection intended to open the eyes of the people at large to the beauty of nature ought to have such a series. These pictures by Monet are, of course, but one example of the way in which the impressionist painters have seen, and can teach us to see, the ever-varying beauty of nature, and particularly of the trees; but this one instance must suffice for us here.

And now I return to English art, and to an artist with a brief note upon whose interpretation of trees I am well content to end this book. Very different from the tree-painting of Holman Hunt and Millais, more akin in some ways to that of the impressionists, was the

tree-painting of G. F. Watts. The importance of his landscapes has, I think, been underestimated, and I have elsewhere given reasons for so thinking. Watts saw all things in their large relations: the world as one of a myriad worlds, time as a moment of eternity, man in relation to humanity, humanity as reaching up into God. If he painted a flower, it also seemed to be a wonderful thing, strangely emblematic of life; and his trees were as if he had seen through their material form and substance to the life and power that brought them into being and maintained them with their roots down in the earth and their utmost branches pressing up towards heaven.

Ruskin, it is said, tried to persuade Watts to study botany. What he would have gained by such study would have been far outweighed by what he would have lost. He declared his preference for trees as compared with flowers; and if we wish for a parallel in literature for his feeling towards trees, it is in the Bible we shall most readily find it. "He watereth the hills from His chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the

service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies. He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. O Lord how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches."

I have quoted so much from one of the great hymns of praise, because thereby the reference to trees is shown in its proper setting, and also because the landscapes of Watts arouse the same thought and feeling as does the psalm. The art of Watts has been called grandiose,

and it has been said that he has lost much by not keeping closer to reality. But grandeur, not the grandiose—the distinction will be understood—is the mark of Watts' art. He himself, in a conversation with Mrs. Barnett, distinguished between reality and truth. "It is difficult," he said, "to explain in easy terms the difference between truth and reality. It might be said that there is a truth that has to do with material things, and a truth that relates to ideas and noble thoughts. The Psalmist speaks truth when he says 'the little hills clapped their hands' or 'the morning star sang'. The hills have not hands, nor the stars throats, but the Psalmist has forcibly conveyed the thought that Nature rejoices and has delight." So, seeking to express the inner truth, and not the mere material reality, Watts made great use of personification in his art. He sought the same end also, in another way: by presenting natural objects in great simplicity of form and colour; yet the form is always noble, and the colour intense; and it seems as if we saw rather the spirit than the mere material substance of sky, cloud, mountain or tree. They give a strange impression of energy, and we feel

as if the power that works in them had become manifest to sense—the power which, as living and working in the tree, and limiting itself there, I have ventured to call "the soul of a tree".

Watts' generalisation of tree-form and colour is quite different from that of a Cox or a De Wint. They generalise so that the trees may not interfere with the feeling of atmosphere, or draw away attention from the general effect of the landscape. They realise that when we are enjoying a landscape as a whole, we do not see distinctly each separate object in it. Only when we cease to regard it as a whole, and let the eye dwell on particular after particular, do we see things as the Pre-Raphaelites show them to us. Each kind of enjoyment has its place; and so has the more ideal truthfulness of Turner or Cotman. Watts' aim is different from all of these. As we think of his landscapes, say of "A Rain Cloud," "Green Summer," "The End of the Day," we see the sun in the sky and earth and water beneath, and almost feel the stirrings of the mighty power that works through these phenomena, and brings life upon the earth, and develops it there from lower to higher forms; and the trees become to us one

stage in the progress of a vast evolution. We see in them the result of an ever-continuing fiat, which the biblical story of Genesis misinterprets only, if at all, by putting back into the past: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind: and God saw that it was good."

It was autumn when I began to write this book, and now that I reach the end of it, spring is here again; the young leaves are unfolding; the earliest fruit-blossom is braving the east wind; soon the later blossom will break out in all its beauty. The fiat of God still goes forth. I have been out to ask the trees what last word I ought to say. And it is simply this: that if this book should fall into the hands of some, be they few or many, who, through reading it, shall come to live more with the trees, and to love them better than hitherto they have done, then it will not be in vain that another has been added to the innumerable host of books.

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